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Regional Oral History Office

Earl Warren Oral History Project

Edgar James Patterson

GOVERNOR'S MANSION AIDE TO PRISON COUNSELOR

With an Introduction by
Merrell F. Small

An Interview Conducted by
Amelia R. Fry

Copy No. 1

A18 San Francisco Chronicle

OBITUARIES

Edgar Patterson, Jurist's 'Teacher'

Edgar Patterson, one of those ordinary men who helped to shape extraordinary times, died in Sacramento of pneumonia at the age of 89.

Mr. Patterson, an African American State Police officer, was Earl Warren's driver when Warren was governor of California. The two men had long conversations about life and racial prejudice, and Mr. Patterson helped open Warren's eyes to the world of discrimination.

"He was part of the education of Earl Warren," said Ed Cray, a journalism professor at the University of Southern California and the author of "Chief Justice," the 1997 biography of Warren.

While Mr. Patterson went on to a long civil service career, Warren became chief justice of the United States and in 1954 wrote the famous Brown vs. Board of Education decision, which declared that racial segregation in schools was illegal.

In the years before he was appointed to the Supreme Court, Cray said, Earl Warren "was insulated from groups of minorities." Warren had been district attorney of Alameda County, and in 1942, when he was California's attorney general, he took a leading role in the internment of Japanese and Japanese American citizens. In later years, he very much regretted his role in that episode.

"He was a man of his time who grew," Cray said. Cray gives much of the credit to Mr. Patterson, an unassuming man who was a guard at the state Capitol in Sacramento. Warren noticed that Mr. Patterson spent much of his time reading — both the Penal Code and the Bible.

When he became attorney general and again when he was elected governor in 1943, Warren picked Mr. Patterson to be his driver and bodyguard. Sometimes, Cray said, when the press of business got intense, the governor would go on drives, "to decompress." One of the favorite drives was to the Sierra foothills. They talked as they drove, and the driver told the governor about his background in New Orleans, and his life in California.

"He told him about black people who had college degrees and who could not get a decent job, who had to work as Pullman porters and garbage collectors," Cray said. "He told him about restrictive covenants that prevented blacks from buying homes in white neighborhoods, and how some Sacramento stores wouldn't serve black people."

"He had a great teaching role. I believe he had an uncredited part in Brown vs. Board of Education," Cray said. That decision, of course, changed American life.

Warren continued to see Mr. Patterson after he became chief justice and the driver and his wife, Marjorie, were frequent guests at the Warrens' home. "We always considered them family," said Earl Warren Jr., a retired Sacramento judge.

Mr. Patterson — who was always called Pat — was also a driver for Gov. Goodwin J. Knight. He then went to college, became a parole agent, served with the California Department of Corrections as a counselor and taught part time at Sacramento State University.

"He was a great American story," said Cray, "the little man who was a hero."

Mr. Patterson is survived by his wife, Marjorie Towns Patterson. The couple had no children. There will be a memorial service at 1 p.m. on March 17 on the Sacramento State University campus.

— Carl Nolte and Chronicle wire services



Edgar James Patterson
March 1939

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PREFACE

The Earl Warren Oral History Project, a five-year project of the Regional Oral History Office, was inaugurated in 1969 to produce tape-recorded interviews with persons prominent in the arenas of politics, governmental administration, and criminal justice during the Warren Era in California. Focusing on the years 1925-1953, the interviews were designed not only to document the life of Chief Justice Warren but to gain new information on the social and political changes of a state in the throes of a depression, then a war, then a postwar boom.

An effort was made to document the most significant events and trends by interviews with key participants who spoke from diverse vantage points. Most were queried on the one or two topics in which they were primarily involved; a few interviewees with special continuity and breadth of experience were asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. While the cut-off date of the period studied was October, 1953--Earl Warren's departure for the United States Supreme Court--there was no attempt to end an interview perfunctorily when the narrator's account had to go beyond that date in order to complete the topic.

The interviews have stimulated the deposit of Warreniana in the form of papers from friends, aides, and the opposition; government documents; old movie newsreels; video tapes; and photographs. This Earl Warren collection is being added to The Bancroft Library's extensive holdings on twentieth century California politics and history.

The project has been financed by four outright grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by gifts from local donors which were matched by the Endowment. Contributors include the former law clerks of Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Cortez Society, many long-time supporters of "the Chief," and friends and colleagues of some of the major memoirists in the project. The Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Foundation and the San Francisco Foundation have jointly sponsored the Northern California Negro Political History Series, a unit of the Earl Warren Project.

Particular thanks are due the Friends of The Bancroft Library, who were instrumental in raising local funds for matching, who served as custodian for all such funds, and who then supplemented from their own treasury all local contributions on a one-dollar-for-every-three dollars basis.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library.

Amelia R. Fry, Director
Earl Warren Oral History Project

Willa K. Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

1 March 1973
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EARL WARREN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Principal Investigators

Ira M. Heyman
Lawrence A. Harper
Arthur H. Sherry

Advisory Council

Barbara Nachtrieb Armstrong
Walton E. Bean
Richard M. Buxbaum
William R. Dennes
Joseph P. Harris
James D. Hart
John D. Hicks*
William J. Hill
Robert Kenny
Adrian A. Kragen
Thomas Kuchel
Eugene C. Lee
Mary Ellen Leary

James R. Leiby
Helen McGregor
Dean E. McHenry
Sheldon H. Messinger
Frank C. Newman
Allan Nevins*
Warren Olney, III
Bruce Poyer
Sho Sato
Mortimer Schwartz
Merrell F. Small
John D. Weaver

Project Interviewers

Miriam Feingold
Amelia R. Fry
Joyce A. Henderson
Rosemary Levenson
Gabrielle Morris

Special Interviewers

Orville Armstrong
Willa K. Baum
Malca Chall
June Hogan
Frank Jones
Alice G. King
Elizabeth Kirby
Harriet Nathan
Suzanne Riess
Ruth Teiser

*Deceased during the term of the project.

EARL WARREN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
(California, 1926-1953)

Interviews Completed by October 1975

Single Interview Volumes

- A. Wayne Amerson, Northern California and Its Challenge to a Negro in the Mid-1900s. 1974 With an introduction by Henry Ziesenhenn
- C.L. Dellums, International President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Civil Rights Leader. 1973 With an introduction by Tarea Pittman
- McIntyre Faries, California Republicans, 1934-1953. 1973
- Richard Graves, Theoretician, Advocate, and Candidate in California State Government. 1973
- Emily H. Huntington, A Career in Consumer Economics and Social Insurance. 1971 With an introduction by Charles A. Gulick, Professor of Economics, Emeritus
- Helen S. MacGregor, A Career in Public Service with Earl Warren. 1973 With an introduction by Earl Warren
- Richard Allen McGee, Participant in the Evolution of American Corrections: 1931-1973. 1975 With an introduction by Caleb Foote
- Donald McLaughlin, Careers in Mining Geology and Management, University Governance and Teaching. 1975 With an introduction by Charles Meyer
- Edgar James Patterson, Governor's Mansion Aide to Prison Counselor. 1975 With an introduction by Merrell F. Small
- Tarea Pittman, NAACP Official and Civil Rights Worker. 1974 With an introduction by C.L. Dellums
- Robert B. Powers, Law Enforcement, Race Relations: 1930-1960. 1971 With an introduction by Robert W. Kenny
- William Byron Rumford, Legislator for Fair Employment, Fair Housing, and Public Health. 1973 With an introduction by A. Wayne Amerson
- Arthur H. Sherry, The Alameda County District Attorney's Office and the California Crime Commission. 1975 With an introduction by Ira M. Heyman, Professor of Law
- Merrell F. Small, The Office of the Governor Under Earl Warren. 1972

Paul Schuster Taylor, California Social Scientist.

Volume I, Education, Field Research, and Family. 1973 With an introduction by Lawrence I. Hewes, Fellow, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara

Volumes II & III, California Water and Agricultural Labor. 1975 With introductions by Paul W. Gates and George M. Foster.

Multi-Interview Volumes

California State Finance in the 1940's. 1974

With an introduction by Stanley Scott, Assistant Director, Institute of Governmental Studies

Fred Links, An Overview of the Department of Finance.

Ellis Groff, Some Details of Public Revenue and Expenditure in the 1940s.

George Killion, Observations on Culbert Olson, Earl Warren, and Money Matters in Public Affairs.

A. Alan Post, Watchdog on State Spending.

Paul Leake, Statement on the Board of Equalization.

Earl Warren's Bakersfield. 1971

Maryann Ashe and Ruth Smith Henley, Earl Warren's Bakersfield.

Omar Cavins, Coming of Age in Bakersfield.

Francis Vaughan, School Days in Bakersfield.

Ralph Kreiser, A Reporter Recollects the Warren Case.

Manford Martin and Ernest McMillan, On Methias Warren.

Earl Warren and Health Insurance: 1943-1949. 1971

Russel VanArsdale Lee, M.D., Pioneering in Prepaid Group Medicine.

Byrl R. Salsman, Shepherding Health Insurance Bills Through the California Legislature.

Gordon Claycombe, The Making of a Legislative Committee Study.

John W. Cline, M.D., California Medical Association Crusade Against Compulsory State Health Insurance.

Earl Warren and the State Department of Mental Hygiene. 1973

Frank F. Tallman, M.D., Dynamics of Change in State Mental Institutions.

Portia Bell Hume, M.D., Mother of Community Mental Health Services.

Earl Warren and the State Department of Public Health. 1973

With an introduction by E.S. Rogers, M.D., Dean, UC School of Public Health, 1946-51.

Malcolm H. Merrill, M.D., M.P.H., A Director Reminisces.

Frank M. Stead, Environmental Pollution Control.

Henry Ongerth, Recollections of the Bureau of Sanitary Engineering.

Kent A. Zimmerman, M.D., Mental Health Concepts.

Lawrence Arnstein, Public Health Advocates and Issues.

The Governor and the Public, the Press, and the Legislature. 1973
Marguerite Gallagher, Administrative Procedures in Earl Warren's Office, 1938-1953.
Verne Scoggins, Observations on California Affairs by Governor Earl Warren's Press Secretary.
Beach Vasey, Governor Warren and the Legislature.

The Japanese-American Relocation Reviewed. 1974
With an introduction by Mike M. Masaoka, Former National Secretary and Washington Representative, Japanese American Citizens League.
Volume I Decision and Exodus (In process)
Volume II The Internment
Robert B. Cozzens, Assistant National Director of the War Relocation Authority.
Dillon S. Myer, War Relocation Authority: The Director's Account.
Ruth W. Kingman, The Fair Play Committee and Citizen Participation.
Hisako Hibi, paintings of Tanforan and Topaz camps.

Labor Looks at Earl Warren. 1970
Germaine Bulcke, A Longshoreman's Observations.
Joseph Chaudet, A Printer's View.
Paul Heide, A Warehouseman's Reminiscences.
U.S. Simonds, A Carpenter's Comments.
Ernest H. Vernon, A Machinist's Recollections.

Perspectives on the Alameda County District Attorney's Office. 1972
With an introduction by Arthur H. Sherry, Professor of Law
Volume I
John F. Mullins, How Earl Warren Became District Attorney.
Edith Balaban, Reminiscences about Nathan Harry Miller, Deputy District Attorney, Alameda County.
Judge Oliver D. Hamlin, Reminiscences about the Alameda County District Attorney's Office in the 1920's and 30's.
Mary Shaw, Perspectives of a Newspaperwoman.
Willard W. Shea, Recollections of Alameda County's First Public Defender.
Volume II
Richard Chamberlain, Reminiscences about the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.
Lloyd Jester, Reminiscences of an Inspector in the District Attorney's Office.
Beverly Heinrichs, Reminiscences of a Secretary in the District Attorney's Office.
Clarence Severin, Chief Clerk in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.
Homer R. Spence, Attorney, Legislator, and Judge.
E.A. Daly, Alameda County Political Leader and Journalist.
John Bruce, A Reporter Remembers Earl Warren.
Volume III
J. Frank Coakley, A Career in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.
Albert E. Hederman, Jr., From Office Boy to Assistant District Attorney.
Lowell Jensen, Reflections of the Alameda County District Attorney.
James H. Oakley, Early Life of a Warren Assistant.

Earl Warren and the Youth Authority. 1972 With an introduction by Allen F. Breed,
Director, California Youth Authority
Karl Holton, Developments in Juvenile Correctional Techniques.
Kenyon Scudder, Beginnings of Therapeutic Correctional Facilities.
Heman Stark, Juvenile Correctional Services and the Community.
Kenneth Beam, Community Involvement in Delinquency Prevention.

INTRODUCTION

I feel a glow of satisfaction in introducing Edgar James Patterson as the subject of this section of the Regional Oral History Office record of Governor Earl Warren. "Pat" (as the Warren family and the other members of the Governor's entourage have always known him) is an example of courage, good sense and successful living. A black orphaned when he was eleven years old, he has studied and worked and served throughout the years until he is high in the civil service ranks of California.

His father was a post office clerk in New Orleans, and at the time of his death was studying to be a dentist. He and Pat's mother died within six months of each other, and the youngster was brought to California by friends and placed in the care of a Baptist minister in Sacramento.

Pat as a senior in Sacramento High School in 1930 made a statewide athletic reputation by running the 100-yard dash in a record-breaking 9.6 seconds. That same year he also starred at the great "Fresno Relays" as anchor man of his winning 440-yard relay team.

But more importantly he has always been a student. He has degrees in police science from Sacramento State University, and in science from the University of California at Davis. And he has advanced in the civil service, which he entered in 1939 as a member of the State Police, to Counselor-Psychotherapist at the California Medical Facility, Department of Corrections, Vacaville.

He was the first State Police officer to become a guard at the Governor's Mansion when Earl Warren went to Sacramento in 1943. Immediately the Warren family took a great liking to their good-looking, affable, and completely dependable protector. He served as Mrs. Warren's chauffeur and as driver-companion to the "kids" on the way to and from school. Two other officers were on call to cover the mansion when Pat was away, the first family's home being under 24-hour surveillance.

Pat had been with the Warrens less than a year when his "draft number came up" and he joined the United States Navy. With that background of police work, the Navy sent him to Great Lakes for training as a petty officer in the Shore Patrol. Patterson was put in charge of a detail of sixty men

in San Francisco, and was discharged after the war as a chief petty officer.

His good friend Governor Warren had persuaded the legislature to protect the civil service "rights" of the men and women who went to war, and Pat reclaimed his job at the mansion--which was exactly what the Warrens hoped he would do!

There were of course long waiting periods in Pat's little kiosk at the foot of the stairway to the mansion's kitchen wing, but he didn't waste the time. Rather he enrolled in McGeorge School of Law, and many's the time I saw him poring over his textbooks while on duty.

In 1959, some years after Earl Warren had gone to Washington as Chief Justice of the United States, Pat became a parole officer in the Department of Corrections. Still another successful civic service test in 1967, and he rose to counselor-psychotherapist.

He is also "Professor" Patterson. For fourteen years he has taught police science two nights a week at Sacramento State University, and over a thousand men who have made their marks in law enforcement work (one a chief of the State Highway Patrol) have been his students. Now they affectionately call him "Doctor" Patterson. Pat thinks this is quite a joke--but it may not always be other than true. After he retires from the State service this year (1975), he is either going to resume the law course he could not complete before, or study to become a child psychologist.

His wife of thirty-three years, Marge, wants him to do the latter, "because he's always happiest when he's working closely with people, and helping them," she says.

As he has done in all his important decisions, Pat chose wisely in marrying. His lovely wife is a graduate of Temple University, with a degree in music. Like her husband, Mrs. Patterson served the State of California. She was employed by the Board of Equalization sales tax division for thirty-four years before her recent retirement.

While Patterson was still in high school, and long before Marge knew him, Pat for \$50 down and \$15 a month bought a lot on what was then the outskirts of Sacramento, and held it "with the idea that when I found the girl I wanted to marry, I'd build her a house on it." He followed the script to the

letter, and a Sacramento banker thought so highly of Pat that he let the couple have \$1,000 on their personal note so that they could have furniture for their new home.

Edgar James Patterson has been a credit to himself and Marge, and to all his friends, including especially Earl Warren. Mr. and Mrs. Patterson were the last of the former Governor's staff to see him alive. They visited Earl Warren in Washington two weeks before he died on July 9, 1974.

Merrell F. Small
Former Departmental Secretary
to Governor Earl Warren

January, 1975
Sacramento, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Two sessions were held with Edgar J. Patterson, the first in San Francisco at the Hilton Hotel where he was attending meetings, and the second in his home in Sacramento where he and his wife have lived all their married lives. Interviewing "Pat" carried bonuses for the interviewer such as a guided tour through the state's medical (psychiatric) facility at Vacaville-- a prison in which Pat is a psychotherapist and one which symbolizes more than any other the correctional reform program of the Warren administration.

Another bonus was meeting his wife, a petite, intelligent woman who later agreed to add her geneology to the appendix. Her quiet hospitality added to the success of the interview. After Earl Warren died, she and her husband reconstructed their last conversation with the Chief Justice so that it, too, could be appended.

Pat himself was interested in the interview from several perspectives: he was intent on recording his story of Earl Warren, the family, the mansion, and how his own life had been influenced by the then Governor; he himself also was taping interviews with prison patients at the time, and the value of his tapes for his own field was a subject of off-tape conversations. He and his wife have kept a scrapbook of and for the Warren children for years, covering many press accounts of their activities; Patterson's continuing affection and concern for the family was most apparent, and that the feelings existed on both sides was proven by the Warrens' visit with the Pattersons at Davis that year, and the Pattersons' visit to Warren in Washington only days before his death. Pat's warm, paternal concern for the former Governor and his family was one of the main factors that led to his eagerness to contribute to a historical picture of them.

Amelia R. Fry, Interviewer
Regional Oral History Office

1 June 1975
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I FROM NEW ORLEANS TO SACRAMENTO
(Interview 1: July 20, 1970)

Fry: First let me get where you were born and when you came to California, something from your background.

Patterson: I was born in New Orleans, Louisiana; and came to California in 1923 at an early age. My father's name was Charles Patterson.

Fry: And your mother's name?

Patterson: Johnnie, Johnnie Mae.

Fry: And do you know her last name?

Patterson: La Luna, or something like that. A French name.

Fry: If you have a way of looking it up, it might be nice to put this in the record. Because as you know, we are having more and more calls for materials on Negro history. I think our libraries are going to be hard-pressed to supply it.

Patterson: I can't tell you too much about them, because I've been trying to run them down myself. They died when I was real little. My father and mother died almost six months apart. I practically raised myself. My aunt raised me more or less. Of course, I came out here when I was young. My parents never did come to California.

Fry: Was your aunt out here?

Patterson: No! I came out here with Mr. and Mrs. William Thames, the Reverend Thames.

Fry: To what town?

Patterson: Sacramento. Mrs. Thames died I think about four

Patterson: years ago.

Fry: Oh, I see. Then they were more or less your parents.

Patterson: Yes, I just adopted them more or less as parents.

Fry: And they came out here from where?

Patterson: From Louisiana. They knew my folks.

Fry: Do you know anything about your grandparents?

Patterson: No--

Fry: You don't know who they were?

Patterson: No, I tried to trace them down, and I tried to figure that out, and I know part of it--I was trying to figure it out from what somebody was telling me. Last summer, I was trying to run down the truth, and I'm still working on it.

Fry: What did you do--go back and visit?

Patterson: I was trying to get my birth certificate all together, for when I went to Europe, and I went to New Orleans for a birth certificate. At the time that I was born, they weren't keeping vital statistics. You were born, and that's it. So, if your parents didn't have a Bible, and if the church didn't have Bible records, then you couldn't trace it back very well.

So, I was talking to a cousin, and she said, "Well, there was a Bible somewhere." And so I had to find another way to establish it. "The Thames were telling us about your mother and your father, and about the schools you went to, so you can pick up a lot of that." I've picked up a little about my mother, but she's more difficult than any of them because she was this French Creole type.

Fry: Did you go to school in New Orleans?

Patterson: Yes. Various places. I went to school in New Orleans until I was about the eighth grade, then I came to Sacramento and went all through junior

Patterson: high, high, and other schools in Sacramento. I went to Sutter Junior High School, Sacramento High School, Sacramento Junior College, Sacramento State College and two years at Davis, the University of California at Davis. One year and a half at McGeorge Law School in Sacramento; now it is the University of the Pacific Law School.

I teach at Sacramento State, extra, a course there. My job with Corrections is a correctional counselor psychotherapist.

I was talking the other day at work, and I said, "Gee, someone else wants to interview me about the Chief Justice, the man who I would say is the highest citizen in the country. The week before last, two men came down to interview me in regards to two fellows that came off of Death Row." (Because I specialize in the behavior of murderers, in my work. I have one group in there, all of whom committed murders.) So I was laughing, here I go from one extreme to the other. So you see, sitting here talking to you, I don't know where to begin!

Fry: I was wondering, since you went to school before the Brown decision in New Orleans, if you want to put on record some of your thoughts about--

Patterson: About the Brown decision?

Fry: Well, for right now, just describing your school in New Orleans and how it differed from an integrated school.

Patterson: I used to talk to the Governor about that, too. I used to sit down and we'd talk and I'd tell him about when I was a kid, I was all mixed up because my mother was speaking French. I was a little kid, coming along, and I spoke a lot of broken French. I was six years old before I ever really began to speak the English language. Then I had difficulties in the grade schools coming here to California; I think there were about three of us in my school here who were black at that time. And I was telling the Governor, "You don't really know problems that the black kids had, how they felt, being sometimes left out, not getting the real schooling, I feel, of some of the whites. This is some of the

Patterson: feeling." And he said, (he was just sitting there) "Tell me about how you felt when you were a little kid, going to school."

And then I used to tell him about some of the things that happened in New Orleans, the way black kids felt, maybe being left out, all white kids and you being the only one.

I think from his Brown decision that was handed down, one part of his decision almost quoted the ideas that he and I used to talk about on feelings. Some of the things that we would sit down and stop to talk about, I could see it in his decision and some of his writings, things that he picked up as he was asking questions about how the black man felt, how the black kid felt.

II THE WARRENS' FAMILY LIFE

Fry: When did you start working at the mansion? How did you get that assignment?

Patterson: When he first came there. [1942]

Fry: What were you doing when he first became governor?

Patterson: I was a police officer.

Fry: In the capital police?

Patterson: Yes. Then they assigned me for a year or so there. There were three of us.

Fry: Did you ever know why you were chosen?

Patterson: No. I don't know why. I guess I did a good job.

Fry: I am sure they would want the cream of the crop over there to have contact with the governor.

Patterson: Warren and I just hit it off like that. And then I became special over there. Half of the time I was in civilian clothes, and half the time I was in uniform.

Fry: We for sure want that picture of the staff getting ready for a banquet in the mansion--and identify as many people as you can in the picture.

Helping the Children Grow Up

Patterson: Warren and I--the whole family--we were real close! Mrs. Warren, all the kids. When I was working for

Patterson: him, I used to take him to work and then come back and take the kids to school: wake them up, fight them, see that they'd get all their clothes and everything ready.

Fry: I read, I guess in John Weaver*, that the kids were always embarrassed if you were in uniform, and they'd have you let them out a couple of blocks away. [Laughter]

Patterson: Yes, I'd let them out about a block or two away from school. Sometimes I'd put Honey Bear out more than one block away. She'd have to get to school from there, and she'd be three or four blocks ahead of me, walking. [Laughing] She'd walk in front of me, and I'd be behind her. Then sometimes, she wasn't ready to go from school, but she knew that if she didn't come when I came to pick her up, that I'd walk out there among all the kids and get her.

Fry: In full regalia of your guard uniform?

Patterson: Yes, so she'd come shooting up there to the car. We sit down now and kid about that.

I used to call them, "Come on, you dumb kids, let's get going!" And they used to say, "Come on, Knucklehead." I don't know if you want to put these things on paper or not. [Laughter]

Fry: It would be delightful to get that down as a bit of horseplay that you and the kids indulged in.

Patterson: Just like when Bobby and Nina would be fighting, I'd make one of them sit up front, one of them sit in the back.

Then sometimes when I'd leave the Governor off (he had two chauffeurs--the Highway Patrol would also do a lot of driving for him, and I would drive Mrs. Warren and the kids around).

*John Weaver, Warren: The Man, The Court, The Era, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967.

Patterson: When I'd go pick him up in the afternoon, the first thing he'd start asking, "How's everything?" He'd go away and he'd come back and want to know how the family was, you know. And I'd always tell him everything. Even now--I think it was about a year or two ago, he came to a banquet here, a big banquet--he and Mrs. Warren, my wife Marge and I were there.

And he says to me, "How are the boys doing?" [Laughter] Now, all these boys are married in that family. And I told him, because I see them all the time. At the Davis picnic, I see Bobby and his wife. Or when I want to talk to Earl Jr., I just go to City Hall and have a long talk with him.

I screened all phone calls that came in on the mansion phone.

These are some of the things I remember, with the son, Earl Jr., we are still close friends, the same way with Bobby. [Affectionately] When the Warrens came to the mansion, the older kids were around seven, eight, and ten years old; and I was right with them, seeing that their hair was combed, seeing that they were ready. When you grow up with somebody like that, see them graduate, and go to their weddings, you feel close to them. They'd bawl me out, and call me different names, and then I'd call them down and straighten them out.

Fry: Did you administer "corporal punishment" to the Governor's children?

Patterson: Yes--in words only. [Laughter]

Fry: I was looking at a picture of the family in about their first year at the mansion, and the twinkle in those little eyes! I bet they were a handful.

Patterson: I was always telling them to quit sliding down those stairs. They'd stand at the top, and I'd be at the bottom of the stairs hollering, "Come on, get off." I'd take the Governor to the office, and then come back and get the kids. Sometimes I'd take them, and the other driver would come over and drive the Governor; sometimes he'd walk, all the way over to the office.

Patterson: Those were good days and good times. We used to have a lot of fun.

Fry: A while ago you mentioned Nina would be shouting--

Patterson: Nina was shouting down to me [imitating a little girl], "I'll be down there!" We used to tell her to hurry and get ready or we'd be waiting for her all day--classes would be starting. Same way with Dottie.

Fry: Everybody always talks about Nina when they speak of the family.

Patterson: She was the baby.

Fry: I wondered why she always dominates the discussion of the kids.

Patterson: [Laughing] She was the one that you always had to find out where she was.

Fry: She was never where she should be.

Patterson: Yes. There's one thing I used to kid Bobby about. He would get up and get ready to go to school, then he'd run down and he'd kiss his father. So I told him, "Come on, kid, get in the car. Quit being a baby! Everytime you see your dad, you've got to kiss him." I said, "Be a man and shake his hand." [Laughing] So one day the Governor was getting ready to go to the office, and I had Bobby in the house. So he looks at me, and he walks over and he shakes his father's hand. So the Governor looked at him; he didn't say anything. We got in the car, and I drove him off.

It happened like that two or three times and then the Governor said to me, "Bobby's getting to be a man. He's shaking my hand." [Laughing] I didn't want to tell him I told him to "Grow up, boy, shake his hand." But he brought this up, so I said, "Oh, yes. We got men around here now."

Fry: Later on, did you go through their adolescence with them, their high school days?

Patterson: Oh, yes.

Fry: Did they use you as Mr. Lonelyhearts?

Patterson: Oh, yes.

Fry: Dating would really be a problem for kids in the limelight like that.

Patterson: Yes, it was. But we didn't have too much of a problem. We had a few times that some guy would be calling up there to talk to Virginia. I'd say, "All right, what do you want to talk about? This is a business line." And they had to go through me! [Laughter]

Fry: That was a dirty trick.

Patterson: But they were real nice. Virginia, she's a real lady. She was always a lady, same way with Dottie. They would always let me know if they had a problem. I'd take them somewhere and I'd say, "Now you know when you get ready to come back, phone," and they'd always phone. The same way with Earl Jr. There was never any--[pause]

Fry: --irresponsible attitudes, so that they'd leave you hanging, and wondering where to pick them up?

Patterson: Yes.

Fry: I'd say that that was quite a feather in your cap, getting kids to do that.

Patterson: You don't get kids to do that now, like you did those kids. They would tell you anything that would happen, too.

Fry: Very open kids?

Patterson: Yes, very open. Mrs. Warren, too, she was about the nicest woman you could meet anywhere. Always the same. I used to worry all the time when Nina would ride horses that she'd fall off and get hurt or something. She'd say, "Well, your little girl didn't get hurt today. She won a ribbon."

When Nina had polio, I thought she was going to be a long time walking. Mrs. Warren said to me,

Patterson: "Do you think our little girl is going to get over it?" I said, "She'll have to, I know she will."

Fry: Was Nina pretty good about taking the exercises?

Patterson: Oh, yes. She was pretty good, very good. She took them.

Fry: In that same fall, and this was during the political campaign, too, one of the other girls was in a car wreck.

Patterson: Yes. That was Dorothy, but it wasn't a serious accident.

I have a scrapbook of a lot of the write-ups so that I can take a look at some of the things that we did. I've got a few clippings about when Nina was sick. One clipping tells about the doctor, how he had to get some serum from back East, and how they were flying it in. They had to get it to her quick. I arranged to get it back to her.

Fry: I'd like to see it, and maybe we could photocopy some of those to put in the manuscript. Eventually you ought to donate your scrapbook to the Warren Collection at Bancroft.

Patterson: I am fixing up one, I am getting it all together now, with Knight and Warren, both the governors I worked for. I am going to make one and give it to Mrs. Knight. I am putting another together for Mrs. Warren, clippings and things of her and the family.

No Heavy Sorrows

Patterson: I remember when Warren was sick, I used to read the newspapers to him. I'd read off some of the legislature's bills and things. He asked me, "What do you think of this? What do you think of that?" Always, asking me, "What do you think of this?"

One of the things that he never did do when he was governor, this was to get his medical in-

Patterson: surance bill passed by the legislature. It seemed that that was the biggest thing in his life that he really wanted to accomplish.

I was really sick though when he got appointed Chief Justice, because it seemed like it was breaking up everything that was going real good. Yet I was glad for him that he got it. A big smile and everything on his face! And I knew that he would be in a position to do a lot of things for people-- which he did. Of course, I am telling you this because I think out of all the people in the world that I know, I'd put him the top.

I was talking to some people down in Los Angeles last summer, and I said, "I like people, just people. There are only a few people that I trust--really trust. Warren is the one that I'd trust in everything."

He invited us back to Washington, D.C., the wife and I. We went back there. He took her, and put her in the chair where he made his decisions, told her how they were made. Then he went back to that little office, that little private office. We sat down and we started talking about some of the things that we did when he was governor. How we used to play ball and throw a ball around for the dogs. He and I used to get back there-- [Laughs]

Fry: In the back yard of the mansion?

Patterson: In the back yard of the mansion, and actually get away from all the governor's things. We'd get away and talk about some of the decisions that he made, and what was happening in the state. Besides talking about football and basketball!

I always had all lined up all the track meets and football games that were going on, and I'd say, "Hey, Governor, let's go over to the high school football game." And he'd put his coat on, and walk out there and the Governor would be right there at these high school games, most of them. You know, just relaxing--away from everything.

Fry: Whether or not his kids were there?

Patterson: Yes, whether or not his kids were there--we'd go to most of them. He'd pull for one side, and I'd pull for the other. I'd yell the opposite of what he said! [Laughs]

But you know, out of the whole time that I worked for him, and I worked for him from the time that he came in, when we marched all the little kids in there, the little kids and their luggage, and everything else. I was assigned to the governor to help take care of the family and the governor, and from the time that he came in [with feeling] with all the smiles and happiness and sorrow that I went through with them (and there never was any heavy sorrow in the whole time, never a bitter word between the Governor and his wonderful family), I was always included, as if one of the family, in anything that would happen in that family, just like when Nina was sick that time.

Fry: That was with polio.

Patterson: The Governor was away when she was stricken. I picked him up at the airport, at the plane; and the first thing he asked me, he said, "Well, how is everything?" He always said that to me when he'd come back from the office, "How is everything?" And I used to tell him everything that would happen. Even the kids would say to me, if they would have secrets, "Don't tell my father this; don't tell my father that."

Fry: How did you handle that?

Patterson: I'd tell him, and I knew that he never would say I'd told him. I kept him informed of what was going on, [laughs] everything!

Fry: When you picked him up at the airport, did he already know that Nina had fallen ill?

Patterson: Yes. They had phoned him, and he asked me how she was getting along. I think the doctor was there at the time that I drove him to the house. Everyone was in tears. I told him, "Well, she'll be all right," that she would be all right.

Fry: How did he bear up under a personal crisis like that?

Patterson: Pretty good, he never broke down or anything like that. He was just listening--he would seek advice. "What is going on? What could we do?"

III RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE GOVERNOR

Visitors to the Governor's Mansion

Patterson: Lots of decisions that he made--changes that he made in the Department of Corrections--were really something, when he went in. It was very corrupt. That is, there were a lot of things of a political nature. He just kept making changes.

When he appointed Dick McGee to handle it, McGee came by the mansion and then Warren asked me, "What do you think of him?" I said, "He seems like a nice fellow." He used to say that when he would make appointments, and the prospective appointee would come around, the Governor would say, "That's the way you think of him, eh? Okay. A nice fellow, you think." "He's a nice fellow," I'd say.

Fry: [Humorously] Did you ever have to veto any?

Patterson: Some of them. Some of them I vetoed. Some guys--he would make appointments to judges--I'd say, "Oh, he's all right, but he's a fat-head. He's all right, but I don't like him." He'd say, "All right," just like that. Sometimes when he was deciding on what fellow, I'd say, "Well, I like him," but I'd see where some other guy got the appointment. [Laughs]

Fry: I have received indications from other sources that Warren did make inquiry about the character of these people, whether he was a good family man, and whether he was a good, solid citizen or not.

Patterson: He used to ask the common person about a person. He wouldn't ask some politician about another man.

Fry: You were a disinterested observer.

Patterson: You could tell. They'd come to the house. You can always know by how you greet a person and they react when he comes in. It is like, I remember when Adlai Stevenson came to the mansion. (I used to go and pick these guys up at the airport, and talk to them coming in, and [laughing] get all the information.)

Fry: How did you like Stevenson?

Patterson: Good; I think he was a real nice person.

Henry Cabot Lodge, I think it was, well, those type of people when they'd come. Practically all the big names that would come to the state, I was supposed to pick them up at the airport and bring them to the mansion.

Fry: Did you ever bring Nixon?

Patterson: No, I didn't bring him. He used to come, quite a few times. I think he was just a Congressman then. Then when he ran for the Senate, he came by.

1952 Convention

Fry: Did Warren ever talk to you about Nixon?

Patterson: Yes. We used to talk about him. We'd sit down and talk, "What do you think of some of his policies?" Because Nixon was, I think, running with McCarthy, and had ideas that were very conservative toward the Communists. I told him, "He's a kind of way out type."

I'll tell you another. The guy that was a pretty good guy: Dwight O'dell backing Warren to the hilt. He was involved with the big guy, what's his name--that went to prison? [Laughs] You know, the one that said he was "second governor" in the State of California?

Fry: Oh, Samish, the lobbyist?

Patterson: Samish. Artie Samish. Dwight O'dell runs the

Patterson: newspaper up there in Fortuna, the Fortuna Beacon. That guy would do anything for the Governor. He was really backing him.

There are so many guys around San Francisco here that were really loyal to the Governor, that would come to the mansion with me. I'd sit around and see a lot of these politicians, writers. These were young guys that haven't made the big names, and I was pushing and backing them up, you see, during the campaign. The Governor would go around to these little towns and campaign. These guys would set some of the groundwork for him in these little towns. Dwight O'dell was one of them. He was one of the top men doing this.

Security Measures

Patterson: Then "Pop" Small and I would sit down and do a lot of talking about what the staff did. They had it all fixed so that when the Governor was at the mansion, I was completely in charge of everything. I was the complete bodyguard around him. Anybody who wanted to call him, I had to screen their phone call--for all the wardens of the prisons, and everything. I'd let him know who was on the line. Even the secretaries couldn't pick up the phone and directly call him. I'd pick it up and then call him.

Fry: That was what the Governor's secretary, Helen MacGregor, told me, that you took the telephone and screened calls and visitors.

I was wondering if there was any period when you had to deal with right-wing "nuts", whose opposition became so strong later on.

Patterson: Oh, yes, quite a few of them. Quite a few people would try to set up appointments and say that they would have to see the Governor for a very important meeting. They made appointments at the office to see the Governor. He'd be in the mansion. I'd tell them, "Sorry, but you'll have to change your appointment, because you won't be able to see him

Patterson: now." Sometimes I'd tell them that he's in the office and he'd be leaving the office, going away somewhere. Sometimes I'd have him out of town, while he was in meetings there.

Sometimes I'd see people drive up in cars, three or four of them, like little committees. If I didn't know anything about it, if the office hadn't notified me that somebody was coming, as they always did, I'd just tell them that I was sorry, but he had to go out of town. "Would you make an appointment for some other time?"

Fry: So you could tell that they really weren't on the up and up?

Patterson: Oh, yes. Then Oscar Jahnsen and I, we set up a system around the mansion so that no one could go over the fence, because a buzzer would sound and a light would show to notify me that somebody came in. And I would talk to them, politely. A lot of politicians would try to see the Governor for different things.

Fry: You don't mean they came over the fence?

Patterson: Some of them would try to. And if they spotted the magnetic eye, some of them would try to come around it. Oh, I had two or three nuts come over the fence.

Fry: And you managed to get rid of them politely?

Patterson: Oh yes, politely.

Fry: You didn't have to strong-arm them?

Patterson: No. I never told the Governor about a lot of the things that happened. It wasn't his business. I just did anything I had to do.

Fry: Was his life ever in danger?

Patterson: Well, always some guy was threatening it, never really, not the times like it is now. The things we did then wouldn't be sufficient now, and yet he was well-protected. We never would have to do any shooting or anything like that. You'd only question a lot of the funny characters that'd come around. Stuff like that.

Fry: With the mansion in such a central location, it probably would be the object of bomb threats now. Did you ever have anything like that?

Patterson: No. One time we did, I think about once out of the whole time, we had something like that. I think it made the headlines.

IV REFORMS IN THE CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM

Warren's Concern for People's Needs

Fry: I'd like you to tell us more about your conversations with the Governor on the whole idea of correction reform, and how he saw you fitting into this picture, too.

Patterson: When I was studying the law, I used to ask him a lot of questions about criminal law, some of the things that lawyers do, and some of the things about people confined to prisons. I sat down one day and I was telling him that I had visited one of the county jails. I didn't like the conditions. I told him I didn't like the conditions of some of the prisons either. He was saying that there were wholly new methods of prison life beginning in California. He said, "Go ahead and study law; keep studying like this and eventually work into a system like this, because you have a way of handling kids and people. Maybe you could be very helpful to somebody in the rehabilitation program."

Of course, there were a lot of times when people would come to the mansion--families would come to the mansion. I would tell the Governor about it, and he would say, "Okay, now you do this--"

Fry: These were families on welfare?

Patterson: Families in need. They didn't even have welfare at that time to the extent we do today. I said that there was a family that was really in need, and then Mrs. Warren and I would--if they had a party or something--Mrs. Warren and I would get the left-over food and take it to these people. We'd do it at Christmas, a lot of these things at Christmas. We'd take baskets to different

Patterson: families.

Fry: You and Mrs. Warren?

Patterson: Yes. And then lots of the kids' clothes and things she would give. I know of one family, a lady and her daughter came to me--this was on a Sunday afternoon, that we were sitting there. I told the Governor, "Those people said that they're hungry." I said, "How much money have you got?" [Laughs] But he gave them money out of his pocket.

Fry: Cash out of his pocket?

Patterson: Yes. He gave it to them.

Fry: And these people would come up to the mansion?

Patterson: Yes, they'd come up to the mansion, to the Governor. Nobody ever came to the mansion, the whole time he was there, that asked him for any kind of assistance, that didn't get it quickly. We didn't have all this Medi-Care. We didn't have all this social welfare money like is given out now.

Yet there were certain agencies that we could send them to, that could easily give them some help. They would come to the mansion to see him and the Governor wouldn't know anything about it. I'd call some of these departments, "This is Patterson from the Governor's mansion. We are sending these people over for help." And they'd give it, and then I'd tell the Governor what had happened, so he'd know.

Fry: He saw that underneath that guard's uniform beat a social worker's heart!

Patterson: Then after he left for the Supreme Court, I stayed along with the Goody Knights. He followed along Warren's same way of thinking. When Knight first came there, and the whole time, he used to come and ask me, "How did Warren do this?" and "How did Warren do that? What did Warren--?" He used to go over to the office and sit down, and he used to ask me, "How did Warren do this? What did Warren say about this?"

Patterson: When he signed his first bill, the first bill that he signed, he brought over the bill to the mansion, we went upstairs (he was single then, you know) and he said, "How did Warren do this?"

Fry: You mean, just the mechanics?

Patterson: Well, the mechanics of signing it, you know, and he'd ask. And we'd sit there and talk about how Warren would do some of the things. He used to ask me some of the things I didn't know. I knew part of it, what had been going on, because I was right in the middle of it; I'd go in Governor Warren's office all the time. He had secretaries, just like Jahnsen and Oakley and Newt Stearns and all those fellows. I used to go into the office and sit down, and they'd tell me about the bills that the Governor had to sign. So the Governor would tell me, "I just signed these bills." We'd just sit talking. I was in quite a unique position, by being trusted like this.

Parole and Pardons

Fry: How did you see the development of his attitudes on correctional reform, and parole and probation?

Patterson: Of course he saw a lot of these things as Attorney General that were wrong with the system, that he couldn't do anything about.

Fry: You mean like paroles being granted to those who had the money to buy them?

Patterson: Yes. We used to sit down and talk about San Quentin and Folsom. They have so many young blacks in these prisons. They never could get paroled. He talked about appointing Walt Gordon and how he had a system to change it.

He never did tell McGee what to do. But he said, "Straighten things out," knowing McGee could straighten things out until we would have a real good parole system built up.

Patterson: I would tell him some of the things I would like to do later on, finish college, and I'd like to go into some of these fields. One of the fields I told him I'd like to go into was parole. I said I'd just like to be able to go to homes--take a guy out of prison and see him become successful. And out of the whole prison system, when I was a parole officer, I had a certificate of commendation on the wall, that I got forty men out of prison. They were the toughest prisoners that you can get--forty-four, I think it was, and within the three years they were out, not a one of them had to go back. And they gave me a certificate for being the successful person to go in on a stress program to keep these men off the reports again.

When we went back to visit in Washington, D. C. (Senator Kuchel set the thing up so that the wife and I could go to the United Nations, like a delegate. We were sitting next to Mrs. Roosevelt. The Russian Delegate, I think it was, was next to my wife.) When we were back in Washington, I was talking to Warren, telling him some of the things that I thought about the parole system. I did a lot of studying for it before I went into it. I wanted to find out what I could do, and I came to San Francisco--lived in Sacramento and did parole work in San Francisco. One of the things that they did when they appointed me down here--they had their parole officers divide their cases up, and they gave me all the toughest guys to supervise that they could give. This was in 1959.

I had an office. I had ten guys in my case-load that were murderers, that type of violence. I did real good; not very many of them fouled up.

Fry: How about Warren's attitude on pardons, because this is what he had argued against when he was Attorney General. I wonder how that developed.

Patterson: His whole approach to that was--he was the first one that started the process that a pardon had to be recommended by the men that he appointed, the Adult Authority. A pardon, before the Governor came in you know, used to be granted by judges, politicians, people like that. A man getting pardoned from prison, and sent up to [Corrections

- Patterson: Director] McGee, had to be recommended and approved by the Adult Authority. Before Warren set that up, the rich guys could buy a pardon. Through our system, they passed this law that they allowed so much time for the studying of your case, to see whether you should be pardoned.
- Fry: Oh, yes. He didn't like these last-minute things. He wanted time for the case to be adequately studied.
- Patterson: Yes. That's what brought that in. I think he really wanted to get away from this Friday execution. A lot of times, you could always tell when a man was executed, he had kind of different feelings on Friday or the weekend. It seemed like there was something bothering him; he couldn't reach it.
- Fry: After an execution?
- Patterson: Yes, after an execution. We'd walk sometimes, and we'd take these long trips in the car. You could always tell that he was worried about men that had to be executed. He had no power, really, to stop an execution, because the courts had found the man guilty and everything was stacked against the person.
- Fry: I thought he had the power.
- Patterson: Well, he had to follow along with the rules, you know. The Governor didn't just have the power--even now.
- Fry: Can he stay an execution?
- Patterson: Yes, he stays an execution; but the courts are supreme, he has to go along with them.
- Fry: Was that true in Warren's time?
- Patterson: Yes.
- Fry: But at any rate, you feel that he felt uncomfortable about capital punishment?
- Patterson: Yes, he felt uncomfortable with capital punishment. If a guy would take somebody's life he had to be

Patterson: punished, or something. And yet Warren never came out and made any big noises about doing away with capital punishment. But it is amazing, he did a lot of things to keep a lot of guys from being executed, and nobody really knows that he did.

The cases were really studied. There were not any cases that slipped through where an innocent person was executed during the Warren administration, like they did before. This is one of the things that happens in a new correctional system, that a few years afterwards you find out that the person was actually innocent of the crime for which he was executed. But if you study some of the cases during the Warren administration, you find that there weren't any.

Fry: What did he do to prevent executions? This is outside my field of knowledge.

Patterson: He'd just stay the execution. They would go back to court, see if somebody would bring up some new evidence. You had to go through the file, and if there's evidence, go back to court.

Fry: Did he talk to you about these feelings of his?

Patterson: Yes.

People ask me some of the things we'd talk about. I guess we talked about practically everything. Just like this last meeting that we were together, over there in Davis when they dedicated the Martin Luther King Law School, he always asked a lot of questions. "What are you doing now?" And I started telling him, "I am in corrections." And he said, "How is everything in corrections? How is rehabilitation coming? What are some of the problems being dealt with?" Just like I was telling him the last time, "Oh, we still get a few phony guys on the Adult Authority Board. They're not as screened as they were when you was on there."

Community Relations

Patterson: Then I said, "We begin to get a lot of new programs,

Patterson: trying them out. People don't know what they're doing half of the time." We just talked a few minutes on that.

I said, "I have a specialty at the present time. I am doing a lot of extra studying on police and community relations." Then I told him, I said, "Now the first class that I taught in college, I had twenty-eight students in my class. Of twenty-eight students, I had three seniors and all the rest of them were graduate students. I had a district attorney in the class, who had gotten his law degree without getting his college degree. So he was studying to get his degree and he was in the class.

"Some of the new ideas that came up in that particular class out in Sacramento State--a little girl, one of the graduate students, was saying that you could take a police department and put them in blue blazers, and let them go into the community and sell the idea of the police. We took this as a class study and we wrote recommendations and sent them to different police departments throughout California. Three departments put this into effect. Sacramento just put it into effect this year. They are using blue blazers for their communication relations. The whole semester, nobody missed a class. Everyone got an "A" in the class as it was really an "A" class! We got a big write-up in the paper."

Fry: I've read about that blue blazer idea, informality instead of a uniform.

Patterson: That came out of our class.

And then I was telling Warren, "These are some of the things that we need to do now, giving students a lot of trust in themselves; let them be involved in police work." Things like this we would talk about.

Fry: A moment ago we were talking about parole; I wanted to ask you about probation also. What were Earl Warren's attitudes on that when he was dealing with the whole corrections picture?

Unusual Class Has Meeting On 'Understanding People'

By ROD BEAUDRY
Sacramento Union
Staff Writer

As the body of Robert F. Kennedy was en route from Los Angeles to New York Thursday, an unusual class at Sacramento State College was holding its last meeting.

William Bonner, a member of the college alumni association delivered a short talk to the class and tried to express "some of the things that Pat Patterson was attempting to do in his class."

Last Sunday The Sacramento Union carried a story about this class at SSC, which also had an unusual professor.

This past week, Edgar J. "Pat" Patterson, who works full time as a psychotherapist at the California Medical Facility at Vacaville and also teaches a class at State, held a dinner for his class, most of whom will be leaving the school with either bachelor of arts, or master of arts degrees.

Bonner told the group that the most important function in their careers was "trying to understand people." He said

Patterson was attempting to "humanize" law enforcement.

"We have to overcome our personal prejudices and really try to understand what people are saying," Bonner said referring to the assassination.

"If the person who shot Robert Kennedy knew what he (Kennedy) really stood for, the senator would not be dead today," he said.

Patterson also had some parting words for the class:

"I don't think we are living in a sick society.

"We are living in a changing society—and young men like you can make it a better society.

"We CAN do something to change behavior and attitudes."

During the past semester, Patterson played an important role in influencing society. Many members of his class are already in key positions in law enforcement.

Charles Brown, a member of the Davis Police Department and in charge of training, was in the class. G. Dave Teja, the district attorney of Sutter County, was also in the class.

Also included in this "unusual" class were city and county police officers, a captain in military security, a Highway Patrol sergeant in charge of training new recruits, a former body guard to Vice President Hubert Humphrey and a member of the State Justice Department.

"They are all top men," Patterson reflected as he recorded grades—which were all "A's." "We had a cross section of law enforcement and this is great."

Patterson presented each of the class members with his grade at the dinner. They were on hand-inscribed certificates.

He said the inmates at Vacaville had done this in appreciation for the time the "boys" spent at Vacaville during visits as part of the class.

The teacher has a domino theory of his own. He believes others will be affected for every student who goes into society attempting to understand and influence people in a positive way.

Patterson now has 28 dominoes.



"Be more humane . . ."



"... or a police state could develop"

Rehabilitation Programs

- Patterson: Well, my opinion from some of the decisions was that he felt that that was the main thing, that they should have given more probation, court probation, instead of a lot of confinement in prison.
- Fry: Do you remember the time he came out very strong for a "certificate of rehabilitation" that prisoners could have when they had finished their term, to help them find their place in society again, and enable them to become voting citizens? Do you remember anything about that developing as an idea?
- Patterson: Yes. This was one of the things that developed from his idea of probation. This is one of the big things now in corrections. You see, when a man gets out of prison, through this state law, he can come right out and put in for his rehabilitation paper. He goes to a district attorney and he writes it out, and after so long on parole, he gets this.

Sometimes a man on life parole wants to be pardoned; he has a clean record for a long time. A lot of these are being given out. They give them out, not as a Christmas present, but at that time of the year. You see it in the paper; the governor signs a lot of these papers. If you notice the California rules, there are a lot on the restoration of civil rights and things like this passed under the Warren administration, in his new deal on parole and probation under the correctional system.

Under his administration we were able, with McGee, and Walter Gordon, at that time on the Adult Authority--they were able to implement these laws, the legislation which enables us today to have one of the best systems of probation and parole, and also corrections, in the whole country. People from England come here now to see one of Warren's pet things in the correctional system, and that is the medical facility at Vacaville, where I am.

There isn't any place in the world where you find studies, diagnoses being given to prisoners as you do in Vacaville. Under the new law, if a man commits a felony, the judge can send him down to Vacaville for a ninety-day study. A lot of these are things that are being put into effect

Patterson: from the Warren system of changing rehabilitation and parole and the correctional system.

At that time he had a bunch of young men that he started out in the system, like Procunier, who's in charge now. He was one of the young men under the Warren system. All of them were really young guys at that time--twenty-one, twenty-two; some in college or just coming out. Now they've graduated to being pretty big men.

Fry: So there has been continuity then in the actual operation of the department?

Patterson: Yes.

V WARREN'S APPOINTMENT AS CHIEF JUSTICE

Fry: I also wanted to ask you if Earl Warren talked to you any about medical expenses. Did he talk to you any about this problem before he got sick?

Patterson: Yes, he was sick twice, and a lot of times when he was sick I used to go down and sit and talk to him in the hospital. When he came to the mansion recuperating, that was the time when I used to take him driving way out in the hills. In the afternoons we'd go, he didn't know where we were going half the time.

Fry: You'd just drive?

Patterson: Yes. And we'd talk. One thing that he said to me, when he came out of the hospital, "Pat, you know the only people who can afford to go to the University of California Hospital are the rich and the real poor. The man in the middle, he can't afford it." This was his concern on medical insurance and taking care of people. He did a lot of talk about that.

There was something he said to me one day. He said, "I don't know how, but I'd like to put my mark on life." And I think this was one of the things he wanted to do. I don't think that he thought that he would make his mark in life as a Chief Justice--at that time Chief Justice Vinson was living, so he didn't have any idea of this.

When he left for the Supreme Court, they interviewed me on the radio and television: "What kind of Chief Justice would he make?" And I told them, "He will make one of the best!" The commentator asked me, "Why do you say that he will make one of the best?" I said, "I'm speaking from not just looking at the man; I am speaking

Patterson: of the man that I know. I know the way he thinks, I know how he feels toward people, I know how he feels toward justice. From this I draw the conclusion that you will read about him being one of the best Chief Justices the country has ever known--the world has ever known." I told him, "That is why I made that statement."

Then he asked me, "How did you get along with him?" I said, "I never had a bitter word. He's given me some of the best advice I've had in my whole life. Always encouraged me, always used to say to me, 'Get a good education. Keep reading, reading is an education. Get educated. A degree doesn't mean all that much; education means more than that.'"

That was one thing that I did when I was working for him; I was going to school. When the kids would go to school and the Governor was in his office and I didn't have anything to do, Mrs. Warren'd say, "You ought to go to school."

Fry: You went to school in the day time while the kids were in school?

Patterson: I went in the daytime while the kids were in school. I used to go to school at McGeorge at night. I'd only have two hours of school. I'd go to school and come back, and they allowed me to do this.

Fry: You were there when he was appointed to the Supreme Court. Could you tell me how that occurred?

Patterson: Yes. A high official from Washington, D.C. called. I think Kuchel was in on it. So U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell came out here.

Fry: Were you in on that at all?

Patterson: Oh, yes. I picked him up and brought him to the mansion. Then they had an interview. Then they had quite a few calls back and forth.

Fry: Did Warren tell you anything about Brownell?

Patterson: Well, we talked, and I said, "Somebody is going to Washington, D.C." [Laughter] And he said he hoped so.



Governor Earl Warren on his way to be sworn in to be Chief Justice, 1953.



Governor Warren just left for Washington, D.C., 1953.



1953

Fry: This was after Brownell came in?

Patterson: Yes. We got a lot of calls from him, Brownell. Then we got--I think the last call came from Sherman Adams. It was a Sunday and I took the Governor to the airport.

Fry: You drove him out?

Patterson: Yes. To meet with a high official from Washington, D.C. And he came back all smiles; nobody said anything. Of course everybody around him, we knew what was happening.

Fry: What did he say to you when he got into the car after the airport conference?

Patterson: Later on he told Mrs. Warren, when he got in the car, "We're going to Washington!" I said, "We're going to Washington?" He said, "We hope so." You know, he never said anything definite until he was sworn in. He wasn't sure.

The newspaper guys came and asked me, they heard that Eisenhower is going to appoint Warren to be Chief Justice. I said, "Do tell me about it! What about it?" They said, "Somebody had a secret meeting." I said, "Where was it?"

Fry: The reverse press interview?

Patterson: And they wanted to know, so I said, "Well, I'll tell you, the best thing to do, if you really want to find out exactly what is going on, you call Newt Stearns." And I called Newt Stearns and said, "Hey, the newspapers are trying to find out what happened. And I told them, 'I don't know anything we are still trying to figure out what happened.'"

And he said, "That's the way to handle it. Let them go through the right road." We never gave out any information.

Fry: Did I interrupt you when you were about to tell me what he said to Mrs. Warren, after the airport meeting?

Patterson: Yes, he told her what had happened. So she went

Patterson: around there smiling, but she was another one like that. It didn't bother her until it was final.

Fry: She wasn't going to think of it as definite?

Patterson: No.

Fry: You mentioned Sherman Adams calling up.

Patterson: Yes. That was right. After the death of Vinson; during that period Sherman Adams and Brownell were doing quite a bit of phoning.

Fry: Would you happen to know what the main issues were, about this decision to appoint Warren to the Supreme Court? Was there a question of Warren being appointed as a Justice and not as Chief Justice?

Patterson: Yes. This was the whole issue. I think he definitely said that he wanted to be the Chief Justice.

Fry: Why did he prefer to be the Chief Justice?

Patterson: I'm not sure.

They had one newspaper guy; he was from Los Angeles, a Chandler paper down there. He came there one day. He had interviewed somebody back East, and he knew that this discussion was going on, you see.

Fry: About Chief Justice vs. Justice?

Patterson: Yes. He hit it right on the head. These newspapers in San Francisco and Los Angeles, especially Los Angeles, were saying that there was no use stepping down just to be a Justice. He could do that here in California. This was the big decision, and that was why he had all the conversations. [Laughs] We had the line hot and busy going to Washington.

Lot of times, on a Monday, Newt Stearns used to call me up and say, "Anything on the hot line?" This was why we'd laugh about the "hot line" we were talking about, to Washington, D.C. We had a "hot line," as they call it. That's what we called it. "Anything on the hot line into Washing-

Patterson: ton, D.C., coming from the mansion?" I told him there was not anything unusual. We were still talking about whether he was going to be Chief Justice or Justice. It seemed like we'd get the top thing.

VI THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE AND LEGISLATION

Patterson: I used to talk to Newt Stearns practically a half hour, every Monday, over things that had happened over the weekend. I'd also talk to Miss MacGregor.

Fry: Catching up, you mean?

Patterson: Yes, catching up. They were real nice. She was nice, asking me what was going on. The Governor would see a lot of little things of value in the things that we'd just talk about. He knew that I would relay some of the things that he said to me.

Fry: Well, that was certainly a valuable service.

The oil and gas tax that he was suggesting for freeways alienated him from some of his earlier support, like the truckers' association and some of the oil companies. I wonder if you remember any conversations about that. This was late in about 1947 or so.

Patterson: Hmm. Let me see now.

Fry: There was a very big legislative battle to get this bill through to build freeways.

Patterson: This was one of the reasons I was saying that some of the lobbyists were very successful in helping him lobby through a lot of his bills. Like this newspaper man Dwight O'dell and men like this helped push through a lot of these bills.

Fry: As a lobbyist, or was he with a newspaper then?

Patterson: No, he was a lobbyist. Then there was another fellow, I'm trying to think now of his name, that was in on that, helping. Some of these lobbyists were pretty strong. They were backing him,

Patterson: pushing him, helping him politically. They'd come in and talk. He had lots of opposition.

Fry: Very strong opposition, too.

Patterson: A lot of strong opposition. These men would come in--like Pauley, the oil man from Los Angeles.

And then they had a man that used to come over and do a lot of pushing of his bills through. Assemblyman Ray Williamson from San Francisco.

Fry: Oh. Do you happen to know if he is still around?

Patterson: I think he is. He is an attorney. His office was in the Hearst Building; I am sure that he is still there.

Fry: What about Warren's secretaries, like William Sweigert? Did you have much to do with Sweigert?

Patterson: Yes. They were all right. They were real good. They would do a lot of things, I would say, ask a lot of questions and do a lot of close things with him. Come over in conference to get bills through. Out of all of them, I think Oakley, Jahnsen, Newt Stearns were the ones that were really pushing the legislation through, pushing the changes in the administration through the most--

Fry: Beach Vasey, would you include him in?

Patterson: Vasey, yes, I don't want to leave him out.

Fry: And was Assemblyman Al Wollenberg one of those, too?

Patterson: Yes. He was there.

Fry: I think he helped along the medical bill. What about Oliver Carter? He was in the senate.

Patterson: Yes. He had a lot of bills that the Governor would want passed. And, of course, you had the "Old Man," [laughs] I used to kid him all the time, "Pop" [Merrell F.] Small. I used to tell him, "quit showing up on the scene, because you look too much like the Governor, you'll get me confused!" [Laughing]

- Fry: [Laughing] He told me about that.
- Patterson: Yes, he used to come out and show up on the scene; I'd tell the Governor, I used to say, "I don't know if he's substituting."
- Fry: I haven't asked you anything yet about any of the political campaigns. Did you drive him from place to place?
- Patterson: Some of them I did. Some of them I'd go around with him. I used to go out and show up on the scene when he was campaigning. And that helped get him Negro votes.
- Fry: I was going to ask you about the 1948 presidential campaign with Tom Dewey and if you handled any of those phone calls.
- Patterson: Quite a few. That was the thing I was saying we should talk about later.
- Fry: Fine. That would be a good thing to take up at our next meeting.

VII PATTERSON'S EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
(Interview 2: August 25, 1970)

Segregated and Integrated Schools

- Fry: I wanted to ask you more about your experiences in public school, because apparently this was important background for Earl Warren for the Supreme Court decision, since you told him all about it. You had had experience in both a segregated school in New Orleans and (I guess you'd call it) an integrated school in Sacramento, although you were the only one integrated.
- Patterson: Yes. Well, it was a real early part of my life. One of the things was how you feel, how a kid feels, how you feel about being here in Sacramento, going to the schools here and in some of the classes you are the only one [Negro]. I know quite a few of my classes here, there were only one or two of us in it. Of course, I got to be very friendly--color didn't mean much and we didn't have any problem, at least we didn't battle.
- We had some pretty good teachers at those schools, at that time. I think that in my lifetime that this had a lot of bearing on my not feeling too inferior.
- Fry: You mean because of the teachers?
- Patterson: Yes, because of the teachers: you would be involved in a lot of the things.
- Fry: How early did you go to school?
- Patterson: Here in Sacramento--eighth grade, and I was with kids that I still know now: the MacBrides, and the

Patterson: Joneses--even the Jones you just got through interviewing.

Fry: Walter Jones?

Patterson: Walter Jones' grandsons. And then, as I went on into high school, I was a star.

Fry: You were a track star.

Patterson: I was the track star, so I was accepted. I was accepted by practically everyone. Recently, Marge and I were with one of my former classmates--she was a white girl. A white fellow and I would take her books. We'd both walk to class every morning with the same girl. We'd walk her home and all that, and she was telling Margie about how we did in high school, about these old boyfriends--and this was in the early years of my life.

Fry: You were able to date white girls?

Patterson: Yes. That was way back.

Fry: I didn't see any Negro girls in that class picture you showed me.

Patterson: Yes. You look at it and you'll see. There were about five or six. Some of them were ahead of me in classes; two, I think, were in part of my classes.

Fry: That was in the whole high school?

Patterson: Yes, in the whole high school.

Fry: The Brown decision hinged on the idea that education cannot be equal if it is separate. So I wonder what you had told Earl Warren about separate education, like you had in New Orleans?

Patterson: Yes, you feel differently. As I say, I notice talking to some of the young blacks recently that were telling me, "You didn't get much of what I got." I said, "Yes, I had a little of the feeling of it. I left it early, in an early part of my life." I know how it felt to be discriminated against in theaters, eating places, and things like that. The young kid, as he comes along in

Patterson: high school getting this kind of an education, he isn't the same as he would be if he were in a mixed school.

As you grow up you begin to find that this is a basic part of your life. You begin to find out that you have lost something. You felt like you were left out as you grew up. That's where you find the majority of black kids--in the early part of their life they were discriminated against in segregated schools.

One fellow was saying to me, (it was at the mansion one day) "You are so different! Why are you so different? You are from the southern part of the country and others from the southern part of the country don't have the same outlook."

So I said, "Well, I got away from it sooner than they did." If I had been there all along, I probably wouldn't have gotten the basic education that I did. Even my wife, who never was in a segregated situation, has a different outlook than I have.

Warren and I would discuss things like this, that there is no such thing as being separate, from different schools, and being equal, because so much is left out. And it may seem funny until you start to look at it. You look at the situation as it really exists, how can it be? How you feel, your terms, the language, your way of thinking is different from when you go to a school that is mixed, a school that is completely mixed, and you get a different idea by seeing other kids, black and white. You feel like you are part of them. When you go to a ghetto school, where it is all black, you feel like you just can't get across the railroad tracks. You can see the progress on the other side, but you can't reach it.

These are some of the things that you find in men who are thinking now about the total integration. If you are going to live in a country where people are totally integrated, where they work and walk the streets together, they have to mix. So why not start in school?

Fry: Your eloquence in telling me this now may be different from the way you were able to describe it to Earl Warren when you were with him and had only a high school education.

Patterson: It was different. I was closer to the problem then. Now at the present time, I am college-educated--

Fry: And you have an important professional job now.

Patterson: Yes, and I was a high school fellow when talking to the governor. I would be talking in high school language.

The Governor and I used to go to high school baseball, high school football and basketball games. The only black one on the team would be the star. And we would cheer him on. There weren't very many of them. He asked why there were so many black stars; proportionately there weren't that many blacks here at that time. They were just beginning to come in--for the war jobs. And then too, only the parents were here. They'd come for the jobs. A lot of them didn't bring their families. You didn't find very many large families. The schools weren't crowded at that time.

Fry: Oh, you mean they left the kids in the South?

Patterson: The majority of them, when they came, and then the family came later, after they found jobs and after they worked for a while.

Fry: You mean Earl Warren would ask why there weren't more?

Patterson: Yes, we would discuss this, how many of them in the schools. He was quite observant.

Fry: Then, what you told him about your experiences in Sacramento, as a student in an integrated school--

Patterson: --which showed him the value of people being in an integrated school, you can see it today, how valuable it is, how valuable it was at that time to be going to an integrated school even though

- Patterson: there were probably only a few of us there. All the leading men in the city now were my classmates--judges, and some of the highest men here, throughout the state.
- Fry: When did you graduate from high school? Just before the war?
- Patterson: No, long before the war.
- Fry: I was just reading yesterday that just before World War II only 50% or less of the kids who started high school ever graduated. So a high school graduate then was destined for success. It was more likely than for a high school graduate today, where nearly everyone gets through high school, [laughing] by hook or crook.
- Patterson: When I was coming along, that was the main goal--to graduate from high school. I went through the graduation list. There were two surgeons, and some judges, and a successful realtor. And the fellow that works with me now; he and I went to high school together. We thought that this was a great achievement.
- Fry: Well, it was.

College and Law School

- Patterson: Same way when I went on to junior college, the same thing happened. I graduated from junior college here. This was the highest college you could go to here then.
- Fry: Did you go to night school?
- Patterson: No, I went to day school at junior college. They didn't have a four year college here. When I came out of the service, I went on to U. C. at Davis because they didn't have higher than junior college here. I was determined to graduate, so I went to Davis. I used to commute over there. Then I'd come back and go to work.

Fry: Where, at the mansion?

Patterson: Yes. I had a year or two elapse after I graduated from junior college and went to Davis. Then I went to McGeorge College of Law. I used to drive the governor's car to school.

Fry: That's arriving in style. Was this the big black Cadillac?

Patterson: Yes, I parked it outside. I'd park it and then go in and go to school.

Fry: Now was the McGeorge work at night?

Patterson: Yes. You see I didn't graduate from Davis. I went there for a year and then I went on to McGeorge studying law. I used to read the law books to the municipal judge here now--to Earl Warren Jr. He used to come out and see me read the law, and I used to read the law to the Governor. He'd correct a lot of things.

Fry: That was pretty high-powered help you had.

Patterson: I did a lot of work. I just kept working and going to school, taking a long time. I didn't try to rush it, but I knew eventually that I would graduate. Later, I did graduate work down at Stanford when I was parole officer in San Francisco. I placed parolees down the coast and then I'd drive out and see them, go to class.

Military Police Experience

Patterson: During the war I studied criminal law at the University of San Francisco while I was in Naval Intelligence. I had one class, "Rules of Evidence." I was in charge of a patrol group in the City.

Fry: This was during World War II?

Patterson: Yes, we each had areas assigned, and I was in charge of forty fellows. Our area in San Francisco had the best patrol and was the best area in the whole city; it was under control.

Patterson: Even now, one black guy, a sergeant in the San Francisco Police Department, was telling me, "It's too bad that we don't have your bunch here." A woman was free to walk the streets in the areas that we were in. I had guys, they were real live-wires, and they kept law and order. But you couldn't do now what we did at that time. If some man did something to a lady--oh, they'd take him up the alley, put him in the hospital. Nobody would say anything, you know.

One time in San Francisco, there was a sailor got off the boat; he gave his wife \$1800. Some civilian took it away from her. My men told him, "We are going to give you three hours to give it back. And this patrolman is going to be right with you." And we got it, brought that money back.

Fry: You sort of administered your own justice and got results.

Patterson: In a certain way. They know in San Francisco in the police department about the things that we did. Of course we'd have the backing of a lot of judges when we'd go to court. We'd arrest civilians. San Francisco at that time was not under martial law, but this was wartime.

Fry: This was a U.S. Navy shore patrol?

Patterson: Yes. Those are the fellows that I was in charge of.

Fry: And they could arrest civilians?

Patterson: Yes. We had to arrest civilians. That was one thing that we were watching for--servicemen would get out of their clothes, put on civilian clothes. We had quite a few deserters. We didn't know if they were in the armed service or not, if they couldn't produce an identification card.

Fry: What area did you have in San Francisco?

Patterson: We had Third Street and Market, and the Fillmore district, and we had a certain part of Market Street.

Fry: All simultaneously?

Patterson: Yes. We would ride around in jeeps.

Fry: I hope that one of the things that we can put in here is that newspaper article of your ten-year reunion with those fellows, because it gives an interesting account of the social transition of that area at the time.

Patterson: Yes. A man from the paper told me that a police officer down there would like to contact the group that did such a marvelous job in San Francisco during the war. I haven't talked with him.

Fry: You mean right now?

Patterson: Yes. To see some of them.

Fry: To see how you did it. Was it the new police chief in San Francisco?

Patterson: To show him just how--you see, the new police chief started at the time that we were in charge.

Fry: Oh, he was a freshman, a rookie?

Patterson: Yes. That whole unit that was in there was in the Navy.

They drafted me, I didn't volunteer. They sent me to Great Lakes. When I went back there, I was just like any other sailor. The majority of the guys they sent, you know, the whites, went down to San Diego. I went to Great Lakes. The Navy was segregated then. The camp that I went to was all black.

Fry: I guess they integrated during the middle of the war, didn't they?

Patterson: They were integrating there when I left the camp. I went back there and took tests. They gave a test to see how many blacks could they make petty officers, to see if you were qualified.

I was in the first group that they tested. They tested one hundred Negroes there in the whole camp, and then they took the first ten. They rated

Patterson: them and put them in naval intelligence. So I was in that first ten out of the two hundred.

And then they took some of them off to other areas. I didn't know where I was going. Then they gave another test, and said, "Well, you're going back to San Francisco and be in charge of a group that we are going to specialize for all kinds of training." I came here. They didn't tell you where you was going; I thought I was on my way to Honolulu or some place over there. After passing all the tests, you went to school. Three weeks I went to school--nothing but tests there also.

Fry: In Sacramento?

Patterson: No, in Great Lakes. Some of them had to go through tests for eight or nine weeks. I went through that school in three weeks and then after "Boot Training" came back here in charge of the fellows, with a rating and everything! I was a first-class petty officer, in charge of the group.

Fry: That must have been quite a boost for a young man.

Patterson: Yes. We did pretty good.

Fry: Then you spent the whole war in San Francisco?

Patterson: The whole war, yes. While I was in San Francisco, I called the Governor and told him I was here. And he would come by and talk to me when he was here.

Fry: You were in the Navy for how long?

Patterson: Two years.

Fry: And then you came right back to Sacramento to the mansion?

Patterson: And I was very close with him until he left. And after he left, then Knight came in. He introduced me to Knight. Knight and I just hit it off, like that.

Fry: You were working on your master's degree then, is that right? When Knight came in?

Patterson: No, I was still going out to Sacramento State.

Fry: Oh, I see.

Patterson: Then I graduated.

I did graduate work when I was in San Francisco when I was a parole agent there. I went to Cal, and back over here in Davis. I went down to Stanford. That's how I really got a lot of the basic stuff, studying human relations.

VIII POLITICAL EVENTS

1952 Republican Convention

Fry: You mentioned in our last interview about sitting around and talking to politicians in the mansion.

Patterson: Yes.

Fry: This was when they were waiting to see the Governor, I guess?

Patterson: Yes. They were waiting to see the Governor.

Fry: You mentioned the 1952 campaign train and Nixon, and that some of them had commented on this. Then we didn't go into that. I wondered if you could shed any light on that.

Patterson: Well, well. To go into his campaigns like that, there are so many people--it's really kind of hard to--everyone was trying to get into the act.

Everyone was trying to get to him, trying to get his ear, to become involved. It was quite something to stand back and watch some of the men that you read about trying to manipulate, to get to him, to go to the different conventions. A lot of times a few of them would be able to reach him at the mansion, but that was one thing that Warren always tried to avoid as much as possible--not to have too many guys around the mansion. He'd have them in his office, and at the conference room; a few of them he had over there.

When they'd come, I'd usually meet them and talk to them, then notify Mrs. Warren that they wanted to see the Governor. But he tried as much as possible to have the mansion as a home for the

Patterson: family. This was our job, more or less, to really see that this would happen. A lot of times, people would call there to see him. You would direct them away.

Fry: Well, who do you remember in that 1952 campaign especially wanting to go? Or who made it? Can you give us any definite names?

Patterson: Hmnn. I have it somewhere here, a whole list of them. I figured that one day I was going to write a book on this. And I was sitting around one night, I made a list of all the men that would come around.

Some of them turned out to be judges. Some of them went on to be politicians, big men in politics. For certain one very good man never had any trouble when he'd show up, and that was Knowland, Senator Knowland.

Fry: Bill Knowland?

Patterson: He was always a welcome sight. He was a very friendly man to us. Very friendly. He'd stop you for a conversation, wanted to know "How's everything going? Any problem I can help you with?" Especially the old man; the old man was very--

Fry: J. R. Knowland?

Patterson: Yes. The father. And you'd find some of the big politicians, like Lou Lurie from San Francisco, one of the richest guys down there.

Fry: Did he have any trouble getting in?

Patterson: No. These men like that never did. Lurie owns everything around. He's one of the politicians.

Fry: He still is?

Patterson: Sure. He's eighty-one years old. They call him "the politician's friend."

Fry: He didn't hold office himself, but he backed politicians? How did he get his money?

Patterson: Oh, he owned those theaters. He owns a lot of land down there on Market Street. He owns the Geary Theater. Of course you know the Swigs.

Fry: Oh, did he know Warren then? Did he come to the mansion a lot?

Patterson: Yes. Once in a while the big men out of the south used to come up. The big politicians. I have a lot of their names somewhere.

Fry: Beach Vasey?

Patterson: Yes.

Fry: McIntyre Faries, was he another one?

Patterson: Yes. Nice guy.

Fry: We have an interview with both of those men. He was able to give a lot of information on the 1952 campaign train.

Patterson: Yes, he was one of the leaders on that ride.

Fry: Do you want to add anything about the Warren children? How about the girls? They all have a wholesome look.

Patterson: And then, the one thing about them, they were all good-looking inside, their minds. They were all ladies, all the time. We look at a person sometimes just for the physical part, and sometimes the beauty shines out, the inside shines out. That is the way it is with them.

Fry: Yes, that is what I noticed in their photographs.

Patterson: And we would disagree, or we would argue, and yet the beauty was there. The understanding was there. The respect was there.

Fry: Did you have to discipline the girls very much as they were growing up?

Patterson: They would listen. They'd go to a dance, and I'd say, "Well, it is time to come home now."

- Fry: And they'd come?
- Patterson: Yes. "What time is it?" [Softly, in imitation] I told them, "It could be two." [Laughing] They said, "Okay."
- Fry: Well, I think I can understand why Earl Jr. insisted to me that his father never got terribly angry with any of them. [Laughs] You were the one that was really making them toe the line all the time.
- Patterson: When you see Bobby, tell him, "Who used to keep you straight?"
- Fry: [Laughing] Okay. I hope I can get around to interviewing all those children.
- Patterson: That would make a real good history when you get around to all of them.

Campaigns for Governor

- Fry: You wanted to say something about campaigning from town to town? Apparently you did the driving on some of these campaign trips.
- Patterson: Yes, some of them. Some of them I would go, but if school was in (a lot of times school was in), Mrs. Warren would go. I would be at the house to take care of them.
- Fry: You would stay behind as a babysitter?
- Patterson: Yes. He'd come back and I'd meet him. Sometimes I'd meet him at the plane. The first thing he'd want to know is, "How is everything?" "Fine." He'd ask me, and I always gave him the truth. I wouldn't hide anything. So, he knew that.
- Fry: When you went with him on the campaigns, do you have anything you want to tell about how he managed the campaign?
- Patterson: He used to go out friendly, and nice handshakes. I used to go to the little towns.

Fry: Who would be with him in these small-town type of campaigns?

Patterson: Secretaries--

Fry: From his office?

Patterson: From little towns.

Fry: How did he manage to meet the pace of a campaign?

Patterson: He had a real good time. He had some real good campaign men, young men, that would take him out to the airports.

A lot of times I'd drive him out to the airport and then he was on the plane; he'd go up to Chico--places like that--and have cars waiting for him. And then the young men would start to come back, the campaign was on. One thing, a lot of times I'd pick him up at the airport and they'd go their way, and he'd come home. He's one governor that the mansion was home.

Fry: Right in the middle of Sacramento. Earl Jr. was saying how many a time they'd see the plaster crack when the traffic would go rumbling by!

I was just wondering, when he was campaigning, if you could get any sense of the response of the crowds?

Patterson: Well, it would vary. People accept politicians differently then than they do now. We would go to big games a lot of times and they would see the Governor and applaud, a standing ovation sometimes. We used to go to football games a lot of times. I remember we went to a Thanksgiving game out there--

Fry: In Sacramento?

Patterson: Yes. And the grownups and the kids were fighting just to get his autograph. You don't do that now to the governor. You don't do things like that.

Fry: No. In fact, I think Governor Reagan has said that he just prefers to stay away from places like that now, because he'll get booed.

- Fry: You mentioned in the other interview, too, that just your physical presence sometimes would probably win him a number of Negro votes.
- Patterson: Yes, just by sometimes going to games and a banquet. Knight picked this up, too, right after Warren left. They would have hundred-dollar-a-plate banquets and Knight would always want me with him.
- Fry: At the head table?
- Patterson: No, just being there. He knew that I would go up and talk to him. He would be making a speech (we used to fly to Southern California) and he'd look at me and say, "Isn't that right?" He'd have a big audience of people there.
- Fry: In making a point on civil rights or something related?
- Patterson: Yes. Knight used to do that all the time.

Civil Rights: Prison Reform

- Fry: Was civil rights much of an issue when Warren was governor?
- Patterson: Not too much, it wasn't. It was an issue, but they weren't fighting it like they were later. You know, they didn't have the marches and everything. It didn't start until after Warren got the Supreme Court decisions. Then it really started.
- Fry: And with Martin Luther King's bus-rides in the South.
- Patterson: Well, you see that started right after the court decision.
- Fry: What issues would be divided along racial lines while Warren was governor? Are you aware of any?
- Patterson: There weren't any big ones.
- Fry: Well, what were some of the little ones?

Patterson: Oh--

Fry: There was a prison problem.

Patterson: This was one of the things that I was going to say, this fit right in with his changing the correctional system. When he started going in for a change in the correctional system, quickly he involved Walt Gordon, a Negro, from the Adult Authority. He had Walt Gordon there whenever they had a prison riot. They used to have these long dining tables--in a prison riot you'd go in a prison hall dining room, where they'd have all the prisoners sitting at long tables. Now today the largest table is four to a table. No more large tables in the institution. In other words, through a lot of his ideas before he left, this is one of the main things he did, re-vising the whole prison system. Any change, it takes a long time for it to stand on its own. These are some of the things that we did. We don't have the riots that they have in other prisons because we use a lot of the modern techniques now that were brought in by Warren's change. These are the things that he had in the legislation that came up.

Fry: Do you know Almena Lomax, a black woman who ran a paper in Southern California and now she's on the staff of the Hearst Examiner in San Francisco?

Patterson: Yes.

Fry: I think she was a protest leader in one particular prison case--the Wells case.

Patterson: Leslie Wells took the cuspidor and hit a guard over the head.

Fry: Yes, and then he got put on Death Row.

Patterson: He got put on Death Row.

Fry: Was that at all in the mainstream of the issue of corrections?

Patterson: That was one of the things.

Fry: Did this ever come directly to Warren's attention, or was it just a fringe thing?

Patterson: Well, it was quite an issue at that time. Had a lot of outside publicity. That was one thing that was very good in his time, that he revised the whole Adult Authority, and appointed McGee the head of the correctional system, and he was right on it. Everything was coming to the Governor direct.

Fry: So he was aware of this? What finally happened in that? I just know of the fight itself, and I don't know how it was resolved. Did they execute him?

Patterson: No, no. He got life without the possibility of parole. He eventually got that after a lot of appeals.

A lot of things that people don't realize happened in the system, too. That is, that if there ever was any innocent person being executed, they had to change the laws, you don't just execute him, it has to go through the courts again and the Governor would really have a good look at it.

Fry: Yes. He was opposed to sudden, last-minute reprieves.

I am thirty minutes past the time I'd promised you I'd leave.

Governors Warren and Knight Respond to Social Issues

(Interview 3: May 4, 1972)

Fry: I want to ask you about some of the things that are on the other tapes. You talked about how Earl Warren first began to think about integration versus segregation of the schools. And you mentioned he discussed state health medical insurance with you.

Patterson: Oh yes.

Fry: Was this before he was sick?

Patterson: That was before he was sick and during and after

Patterson: he came out of the hospital. Yes--I used to take him for long rides, and I, on a Sunday, and he was talking about his medical program. He had a real good plan--he really wanted it. He and I used to drive for miles and miles, around Placer-ville, in the hills, relaxing in the summer on Sundays, and he'd talk about these things.

He also, after he came out of the hospital, we had a saying that he said to me, "Only two types of people can go to the University of California hospital (where he was)--the rich or the real poor." The middle-class person couldn't go at that time--the middle-class people couldn't afford to go there.

Then he would talk about his plan. I think that Mrs. Warren and I are the ones that really got a lot of listening to him, because I would just listen to him talk about his health plan. And then when I hear and read about it now, a lot of things from Teddy Kennedy--a lot of them, even Reagan--some of them have some of the things in there. But the idea of the plan that's just coming up now is part of what he was talking about.

Nationally--he wanted it nationwide, not just the state of California. I imagine he would have tried to put this into effect if he had been successful and been President. This shows you how far ahead this man was thinking in that line.

Fry: He really was, and it certainly got shot down by this California Medical Association.

Patterson: Yes, some of the things they're doing right now--even all this Medicare, was involved with some of the things he talked about at that time, and they shot him down more so than they are doing now--I mean the insurance companies on "no-fault" insurance. They fought Warren on his health program, medical program.

Fry: Was this hospital, the University of California hospital, you mentioned--was that the one he went to?

Patterson: Yes, that was the one he went to.

Fry: I wonder if he had talked to you any about the problems of paying medical bills before he got sick.

Patterson: Yes.

Fry: Because I'm trying to trace when he first started thinking about this.

Patterson: Yes, he used to think about this. I think someone introduced a bill to this effect in 1945 I think it came in. The thing that he was talking about then, when he came back. I had had medical problems when I went in the service, and while I was in there I broke all my sinuses--and I was talking at that time about how if I didn't have the service connection, it would be costing a lot of money, because I was going in and out of hospitals. He said, yes, and he hates to see little kids with runny noses, you know, because he knew that their parents had no money to give them doctor's care. This was right before he went into the hospital.

There was something else that happened too. He used to see the little kids in the ghetto--the little black kids--and see that they had no medical care. One woman wrote him a letter about how she didn't have any money, and I think he paid for her medical bills. I think Knight did it once, too.

Fry: Oh really, out of his own salary?

Patterson: She didn't have anyplace to go so she came to the mansion--did somebody tell you that?

Fry: No, I think you might have.

Patterson: This was before. And this hit him. He was talking about how people suffered like that. I wish I had the name of the person who he did that, but there were so many things that were happening. We didn't have all social assistance like we have now. People didn't have enough money. People didn't have things like-- What they used to do, the Warrens, they'd have a banquet, and the food that was left over, I'd just take it to some family I knew, people who came by. We used to do the same things with Christmas baskets.

Patterson: I told Mrs. Knight what Mrs. Warren had done, and they did it too--they followed right along with it.

Fry: A while ago, did you say that the same thing had happened to Knight, about somebody coming by the governor's mansion and saying they didn't have enough money to pay and would they please do it?

Patterson: Yes, they followed right in. Knight was a funny man--he tried to follow a lot in Warren's footsteps. He did a lot of things the same way--he just went right in and did everything that he did. When he used to do the same thing that Warren would do, when he'd go out of state on trips and come back--Warren would say to me, first thing--"What's happening?" Knight used to do the same thing. I might drive him to the office, you know, and he would say--

Fry: "Fill me in?" [Laughs]

Patterson: One of the real jewels out of Warren's office was Pop Small.

Fry: The press secretary, and then he worked with departmental heads.

Patterson: He was one of the top guys. He was getting at me all the time, because everywhere we'd drive, I'd have a book. I used to read all the time. I'd sit out and wait for him and I'd read--I didn't care how long he stayed. Sometimes he'd come back too quick, because I wasn't finished with what I was reading.

Fry: Weren't you in school at this time?

Patterson: Yes. But I say that this health care and all of this stuff was originated by Warren, and I see some of it picked up, somebody along the line must have got out some of the files. And they took all this time to do it!

IX PATTERSON'S CAREER IN CORRECTIONS

Parole Officer at Lake Tahoe

- Fry: I need a date of when you went to Vacaville.
- Patterson: Let's see now--I went to Vacaville, I think it was September. [Pause] When did Brown go into office?
- Fry: 1958.
- Patterson: No, it was 1958 when I went in as a parole officer. Then I went to Vacaville--about 1969.
- Fry: You were a parole officer where?
- Patterson: In San Francisco. I was down there about two and a half years, and then I was transferred back to Sacramento. I was a parole officer assigned to what they call the "country club run," I had Placer and El Dorado--I had all the Lake Tahoe counties up there. They call it the "country club run" because you go up to all those resorts.
- Fry: Well, was that sort of a difficult--
- Patterson: Task? Pretty difficult when you first start out.
- I was the first black going up in that part of the state.
- Fry: I should think that would be a hard part of the country.
- Patterson: It was, in the beginning. After I got going, it became one of the best runs, and still is one of the best runs. I was a parole officer at the time that Frank Sinatra's son was kidnapped. I lined up all the parolees we had up there, and we in-

Patterson: vestigated, but none of them were involved.

Fry: Could you give an example of some of the difficulties at first?

Patterson: Going up there? Sure, going into some of these places--well, one of the real difficulties I had was I had to show a lot of proof that I really was a parole officer. And a lot of times I went in places like the mining camps and the sawmills up there to talk to managers, and I had a difficult time placing guys in work, because I wasn't quite known, you see. These are some of the difficult things you have.

I didn't have too much time around the motels or clubs or things like that--at that time everything up there was pretty good. I was able to place a lot of men as cooks and waiters. Really, some of the difficult things I ran upon was with the state. The highway division. Parolees were very difficult to place there--I couldn't talk to a lot of guys up there. The road supervisors, in placing men, just plain old labor, didn't need civil service status. It was hard to get parolees hired.

Fry: Why were they being so difficult about it?

Patterson: I expect they didn't want to have anything to do with any parolee, and maybe they thought I was just going to place a lot of blacks--they didn't know who I was going to place up there.

Fry: They were afraid of the black part of it?

Patterson: Some of them were pretty snotty, too.

Fry: Were your parolees mostly black or mostly white?

Patterson: They were mixed. I had a lot of Indians, quite a few blacks. A lot of them were from Sacramento--they had never been up there in the mountains; I placed them up there anyway. I'd take them up there. [Laughs] I'd say to a guy, "You want a good cook?" I'd have a good cook in Sacramento. I'd tell them, "Just go up there." And place them. So I'd get ready to place them; and sometimes they'd ask me who he is. I'd say, "I'm furnishing you with

Patterson: a good cook. I don't care what he could be--he could be Chinese, Japanese, black, chicano. A good cook is what you want, isn't it?" I know one guy was all upset--he wanted to know what kind of cook I was going to bring.

Fry: What color--[Laughter]

Patterson: What color. I took him up there a Chinese guy-- I guess that guy's still up there--last time I heard from him. I had one black up there who was real good; three or four whites I took around over there. I used to do all this just to upset people, I guess--because I'd go and place them like that-- on farms. Didn't bother me at that time. And when I left, a lot of those fellows up there really hated to see me leave, because I used to keep them with work. And then I would go up and I'd supervise them. I used to go up and stay two nights a week.

The first one--I told you this I think--I took a man over there to Davis at the University.

Fry: I don't think you told me that.

Patterson: I set up this program in Davis at the University. They had never had an inmate working on the campus. So, I went down to Vacaville, and they had a program down there they called the "stress assessment." I got involved in the program--I became the "stress assessment" placement parole officer.

Fry: This was assessing how much stress a parolee has?

Patterson: Yes. One of the best programs they have down there now. Was and still is very good. So I went to the chancellor over at the university and Dr. Smith, who was in charge of small animal care, and I told them the program I wanted to set up. "I'd like to place some inmates. Men that's coming out. Well-trained; coming from Vacaville. Have had some dealing with medication. Some of them have been around it, you know. And I'd like to place some of them in small animal care."

He said, "Well, I don't know about this."
So I went to the new business administrator, Mr.

Patterson: Myer, over there at that time. And Mr. Myer and I worked very closely. He had worked in the state of Washington as an administrative assistant in one of the prisons. So with that and the personnel officer, Mr. Anderson--I worked through him--we set up this real good program, where they would place so many inmates working over there.

So, before I could get the program started, I had one of the program administrators from Vacaville and Dr. Keating--he was the superintendent of the institution at that time--we all went to the university for lunch. We met with the chancellor and Mr. Myer and Mr. Anderson, the personnel man. And we set this program up, which would allow me to place these men on the university campus. Before I left, I had about fifteen men working there.

Then I spread it from there and sent over to the monkey farm, the primate center, and I placed about four guys in the primate center. One of the guys over at the primate center got to be one of the leading men in training monkeys, in how to catch monkeys. One of my men, he happened to be very good. He didn't have too big a criminal history. He married one of the secretaries, I think she was. He's still working for the university. I think he's at Los Angeles--at UCLA now. He went on and graduated and all that. I have two or three of my parolees who graduated over there. And that program--they gave me a certificate, for not having one man go back to prison.

Fry: That's really something.

Patterson: And now I'm down in Vacaville.

Vacaville Group Therapy Program: 1972

Patterson: I am studying under doctors now. They've got two of us down there now, getting intensive study under psychiatrists. I had, since I've been working for the department, about four years of

Patterson: intensive study under psychiatrists--some of the best! The world's best, like Dr. Ernst, Dr. Clannon, and now Dr. South; these are some of the best. Now this is what it is: they have two of us that are doing special study. From 1 to 2 o'clock you are at a table with the doctors. You study problems. You bring the problems up and talk about how you analyze behavior, how you analyze groups. Having a psychiatrist teaching two of us--Dr. Dan and myself--this for four years, you couldn't get the training anywhere else that we receive down there. That is one reason why, at the present time, that they have doctors that are coming in studying for their psychiatric residency. And some of them coming in never had any kind of training as group therapists--especially writing psychiatric reports. They have us show them how, teach them. I am co-therapist with them.

Fry: Co-therapists?

Patterson: Co-therapists with them. There is one guy down there that wrote a book that included how the co-therapists taught him basic things.

Fry: Is this a program that started under Earl Warren, the medical facility?

Patterson: Yes, yes. This is one of his. Well, it didn't start until after he had gone, in 1955. That is when it went into effect, but before he had left this was one of his programs. I think that it's one of the best in the country.

Fry: Is this one McGee pushed?

Patterson: Yes.

Fry: Is it for all prisoners? My guess would be that you must feel some frustration, in that you don't get to all of the prisoners that you would like to.

Patterson: One of the things about it, you see, is we have a receiving guidance center, which is a diagnosis clinic. People come in and they have psychiatrists and psychologists. They go to them to determine what psychosomatic illnesses they have. We don't treat all of them. Some of them we send to other institutions and then after they are re-programmed

- Patterson: we try to get them back to Vacaville for their intensive psycho-therapy treatment. Those are lucky that get back there. They get the best. That's why you give them so many hours a day intensive therapy in a therapeutic setting. The mentally disturbed, the emotionally disturbed, they can always call for one of the therapists.
- Fry: So you are on call there most of the time.
- Patterson: Yes--there. And there are quite a few therapists there. They have a large team of psychiatrists come in. They pay them pretty good. They are well-trained. Dr. Bulstein, he teaches at Cal, at Berkeley.
- Fry: How are the patients selected?
- Patterson: They are selected through a committee. The committee consists of one psychiatrist, one psychologist and then they have one specialist sitting there. The specialist sits in on the history and he's supposed to be broad and well-versed in criminology and psychology. When I went to school my major was in criminology and then my next major in graduate work was in psychology. So you know, you can point out what is happening. I present the case to the committee, that this man was sent here for psychotherapy. We read his background, and we see if he's capable of making a change. Put him on a trial basis, and we give him a lot of physical tests and mental tests. He's had some before he came to Vacaville. And then you give him EEG, which is tests of the brain, to see if he has any brain damage, things like that. Then we put him on a list and the therapists pick him up.
- We have visiting therapists, psychiatrists, from Napa, San Francisco, a lot from Berkeley--all around--come in and give therapy. They have groups and the groups consist of from six to ten and twelve. Now in my group, I specialize in murder groups. One guy specializes in bank robberies. I have one group of fellows who have tried violence. One thing that I haven't specialized in yet are groups of all fellows that have narcotics. Of course I have some mixed in my groups.

Patterson: They have two of us down there, specialists. One time I had seven groups, but now I have only five groups. I keep these five groups. I take four intensive groups, and one group consists of men who have dates. Being an ex-parole officer, when a man receives a date I place him in this group so that--

Fry: What do you mean, "a date"?

Patterson: A date to go home. He has a parole date.

I put him in this group, and then we talk about it and I present them with the outside problems they will encounter when they leave prison, and we deal with these problems. We deal with the problems that they are going to have with their family, and jobs, and girl friends. A lot of them don't know it.

We play the role of father and mother. We have visitors come in; girls come in; women come in and sit in the group; tell them what is going on in the outside. Girls come in to the prisons themselves, sit down and talk to them, tell them things like these that are real problems that they are going to find.

During school time, I take school kids that have problems themselves and bring them before these groups. And then they get involved.

Fry: Therapy both ways.

Patterson: Therapy both ways. Some of these men that have dates and some of those that haven't dates-- I take them out into the community and let them talk to students. We are beginning to do quite a bit of this.

Last semester, my class consisted of 151, the largest class that they had out at the school. And I had to divide it scientifically, in sections and group sections. So I invited them to prison one night. We had a banquet, one night. Prison night for Vacaville. So they went down there. It was quite a trip for a lot of them. There were a lot of them who had never been to a prison before.

Patterson: So I had the tables set up, four to a table. Two hundred and sixty students, and they could bring their mother, and father, their wives, girlfriends, if they wanted. At each table would be three students and one inmate. And this inmate was free to tell them what he wanted to tell them.

I had a meeting with the inmates before. I said, "You are free to talk, try to talk about your problem. Try to talk about how you got here. Talk to some of the kids and tell them about staying away from here."

So we'd go from 7 to 10 o'clock in the dining room. It consisted of a band playing, food, and then I had three inmates who talked to them over a microphone, one white, one black, and one Mexican. They'd get up and talk to the whole class--almost two hundred students. This is the first time ever--it was pretty good. Some of the things were real good--dynamic feelings and all, in the institution.

Some of the things very good about the whole program was bringing the students to sit in on intensive therapy. You couldn't allow this to happen before.

Fry: And they were actually part of the group, they weren't behind a one-way mirror?

Patterson: No, no, they actually sat in. You'd argue with them. And the girls would call here and talk and set dates to go to Vacaville. They'd set dates up with me for going there.

This was something that we'd never had before, and I think that it was very, very fruitful. I think it was very beneficial to the inmates, as well as to the students. Just like the girl who called here today. She had heard about some job that was coming up in this new administration of justice program. I told her how to do it, and gave her my name and my phone number. She'd go out if she wants to and call. She wanted to go in as a worker. She has a pretty good background, so they will hire her.

Fry: When all this was first starting, this was under Goody Knight, as governor.

Patterson: Yes.

Fry: And how did he feel about it? Did you ever talk to him about it?

Patterson: Oh yes. All the time. We would talk, sit down. If you noticed, he followed right along in Warren's tracks. He kept a lot of his directors, a lot of the girls in the office. He didn't go in there and make any changes. That was pretty good. And he would always try to keep in a lot of contact with him. When Warren would come to the state he would try to find out from Warren. It was pretty good.

A lot of the things that they did--they could have wrecked the whole thing, if they'd wanted to--like not appropriate the money for Vacaville. I think personally, not because I am working in it, that it is one of the best programs they got in the state!

Fry: Well, it certainly gets a lot of good reports as an exciting innovation. How has it fared under the various administrations for appropriations?

Patterson: That is the last place that they've cut so far.

Fry: Under Reagan, too?

Patterson: Yes, this administration is the same way. When he had a ten percent across-the-board cut, we had about five percent increase.

Fry: That's amazing!

Patterson: All the hospitals have been cut but not Vacaville. Even now, we have some increase--staff increase. Special programs that people don't realize exist there. We've had doctors from all over the country down there. Just like the doctor that killed his wife back there--Sam--?

Fry: Sam Sheppard, in Ohio?

Patterson: Yes. His brother was down. He's a psychiatrist. He's doing his residency. So he was down at Vacaville for a while. Very interesting. And you get to talk personally with these men. A lot of us get to talk to and deal with men from England and

Patterson: Scotland, Denmark, Sweden and those places. You learn a lot of techniques.

I learned a lot of techniques from a German doctor. He was telling me about techniques of teaching, a scientific way of teaching large groups. Like in this class that I was telling you about, it was one of the first classes taught more or less in a circle. So he was showing me how to keep the class involved, and how to really make them learn.

Fry: And this gave you the idea of dividing your class up into project groups, where one took middle-class problems, and one took lower-class problems, and one took upper-class problems?

Patterson: Yes. And the no-class problems, those students were the most confused of all.

Fry: [Laughing] Really?

Patterson: Yes. Because of their open mind. They have no separation, they can go from here to there.

Fry: Oh, and fewer characteristics that were easily identifiable.

Patterson: So this is one reason why you have to classify them so, because they are learning, and they are supposed to be open-minded and you tell them this: "You are supposed to be the broad one. The one that is able to go in every direction, and bring everything in for a solution."

Studying Behavior Problems

Fry: Why did you go to Vacaville?

Patterson: I didn't have any experience working in the prison, and I wanted some more experience. I went down there on a promotion. After I got the promotion, I figured that would pay for the commuting. I wasn't making any more money, because it would pay

Patterson: just enough for the transportation. But I figured I'd get the experience. And I wanted some more experience in behavior problems.

Then after I got down there I started doing a lot of studying--therapy studying. For three years I was down there training under psychiatrists--only two of us in the class.

Now I'm one of the psychotherapists down there. When I went to Vacaville, they didn't have many blacks and chicanos in therapy settings. They only had very few--for fear, I guess. We still have a lot of problems in rehabilitation and correction.

Fry: You mean in racial attitudes among the therapists--is that what you mean?

Patterson: That's the way it was when I first went down there. It's changed now. Practically all the therapists are mixed now. But when I first went down there it wasn't that way.

Fry: What was it like when you first went down there?

Patterson: When I first went down there, they gave me a group, and all of my group was white. I said, "Oh, no, this won't do." One thing about it, see, they didn't have a black on the committee to accept prisoners in the program. So therefore, the therapists didn't have any blacks on the lists to pick up. If you were a black therapist, and there weren't many black candidates on the list--maybe two or three--you would never get one. You would have just all white.

Now when I sat on the committee, and a black fellow would come up for consideration, a member would say, "I'm going to turn him down. I don't understand his ways and the way he acts."

But I'd say, "Let's give him a try. Just because you've never been around us, you don't like the guy's color." I said, "You're prejudiced. You're race prejudiced. You let your feelings go into your work. You're not doing it right." And I used to sit down and tell the committee all this. I said, "You're not going to be able to keep this

Patterson: up--because if you do, I'm going to blow the top off this place and tell them where you stand." And they changed their ideas. You had to constantly be on them.

One of the things that's happening down at CMF now--I'm the clerk of the Adult Authority board, and I see the hang-up with the hearing reps. They call them the RR panel. They're really uptight men. Old ex-associate wardens. They've still got their feelings--

Fry: Well, what's a hearing representative's function?

Patterson: He hears--just like the Adult Authority men.

Fry: He decides on who gets--

Patterson: He decides on who gets parole. I sit on both of those boards.

Fry: Aren't there more blacks than whites in the prison population, so you would expect more blacks than whites to be in the facility?

Patterson: No, the percentage is not that great. It's 35% blacks and 65% whites--but what they call "whites" are all others--chicanos, Chinese, Japanese, and everything else. They only have two classes in that breakdown. So when you break it down into races, you'll find there are more whites in prison.

Fry: But, if I understand you right, you're saying that when you came there were no black prisoners for therapy in Vacaville--

Patterson: No candidates. They would eliminate a lot of them. Just like until recently, they would eliminate Chinese, because they couldn't understand them--which is wrong. You don't find very many Chinese--now. These are some of the things that are happening. Vacaville is about the best of them all--because it's a treatment place, and we don't have too many problems, because everybody moves around. We need more mixing. We really need more blacks--and chicanos--because you have so many blacks in the prisons.

- Patterson: When I first went down there, they didn't have any blacks assigned in the fire department, they didn't have any in clerical work, they didn't have any in the carpentry shop. They had them all as porters, doing cleaning work. But they don't do it now.
- Fry: But you said you have to keep on top of them--so things don't slide back.
- Patterson: Yes, even right now.
- Fry: You do have more blacks in positions like yours now. Do they help much?
- Patterson: Yes, they help, by them being there. They move around; they're brilliant and not belligerent. They're well-educated, of course.
- Fry: They're also willing to see that prejudice doesn't prevent blacks from being treated, I guess.
- Patterson: There are some institutions that don't have many. They need them, I think. I think Folsom needs them. I think San Quentin needs a lot more than we do.
- Fry: Well, just since you and I talked last, the whole prison reform--
- Patterson: Yes, has been brought to the public's attention. You got to keep it there. You can't just let them down. Just like now, we're having trouble. The other day, for instance--say I'm on the inside and you're writing me from the outside; you're my girlfriend, and I have a wife; they would take your letter and return it to my wife. And they did that! They did that last month. I told them, "What kind of a mind are you going to make me think of, when I think about the prisons?"
- I told the Adult Authority that this was happening to one of the guys that came up.
- Fry: Which prison is that?
- Patterson: This was in Vacaville. See, so you have to stay right on them all the time.

Patterson: Another thing that happened, too. A guy's wife sent him a pair of shoes, so before he got these shoes, some guy had given him a pair of shoes with a hole in it. So he had some paper in it, stopping up the hole. If the shoes that they give them are too big for them, they can sew them up. So they said, "I'm not going to give you your shoes that your wife sent, because you already have been given a pair of black shoes." So she sent him a leather belt, and the belt was an eighth of an inch wider than the rules. So they said, "I can't give you that belt."

Fry: What do they do, sell these items?

Patterson: He wanted to donate it--to the Goodwill Industries. And I told him, you aren't going to send anything out; if you do it, you're going to pay for it.

Changes in Correctional Attitudes

Fry: I'm wondering where the people are that McGee brought in way back when you were still at the governor's mansion.

Patterson: Some of them are retired, some of them are in higher positions, where they don't know what's going on down on the operating level--some of the complaints never get up to them. That's one reason why I personally am in favor of an ombudsman. Because a problem can go direct to him, rather than going up through a chain of command, because it's going to get hung up and there's not going to be anything done about it.

Fry: When McGee was director, were there better lines of communication, or has it remained about the same through the years?

Patterson: Well, you didn't have the same attitudes people have now. Prisoners are just tough--people just accepted the rules then. People won't accept them now. You've got a different prison.

Fry: Are you saying that staff's different or the prisoners?

Patterson: The prisoners are different. The same staff, but you got a different prisoner. You have a younger man; you have a man who's not going to take a lot of stuff. Just like my students. The students that I taught, say in 1965, were different students than I teach now. I don't know if they're more brilliant--

Fry: Well, I judge that the knottiest problems we're dealing with in the outside society are now usually carried into the prison--such as race relations, poverty, drugs, all these things--

Patterson: That's right. I have to get Earl Warren's new book. I've been hearing that a lot of things that he used to say about rights are in it. When you say "civil rights," you mean there are so many rights that have been taken away from us. The right to speak your mind, for example. The only things the federal or state government can take away from a citizen are maybe his citizen rights, civil rights, but they can't take his constitutional rights, and they've been doing that, you know, stepping on a lot of the constitutional rights that a man has, and the privileges. And a lot of them don't want these changes.

This is one of the reasons why I don't care too much for placing a lot of the old guys, who think they've gone up through the ladder, at the top to handle the real decisions of when a man should get out of prison. Because they still got that same stereotype in their minds, and they're with their own hang-ups. And if you're going to put a man in a position like that, he shouldn't be in a civil service position--he should be in a position that varies, that way he can be removed. Not staying there long--two years is enough, and then make a complete change. Because they stay too long, they think they get too much power.

Fry: Well, Pat, over all, how would you assess the corrections department as it was under Mr. McGee?

Patterson: Well, at that time it was good. At that time you didn't need too many changes, because it was all

Patterson: subtle problems. You didn't have the killings that you have now. The type of guy that was in prison at that time, it was easier for him to follow the red line that they painted. Paint a red line now, and these young kids would paint it black--you'd have it red tonight, and it'd be black tomorrow or white tomorrow.

I think the prisons are better now. I think they have better food, more freedom, they're following along with the things that they have on the outside. Like in Vacaville, some of the guys that come to Vacaville never will live as good as they're living in Vacaville when they get out. Because they have color TV, three meals a day. Very seldom that you go to any home where they change the linen twice a week. They give them three pair of underwear a week that they change, two pair of pants. The average college kids don't do that. [Laughter]

From the Top to the Bottom

Patterson: Of course, I've gathered a lot of material, and I'm going to write a book. It's going to start with all the big men I've worked for--the governors that I worked under, how I worked for them, and what I did with them--the highest men I met in America, how closely I came to knowing the highest men in America. Like I've known Henry Cabot Lodge personally, Adlai Stevenson personally; I was with John Kennedy when he was still Senator--I spent about three or four hours alone with him.

Fry: Oh really, what for?

Patterson: When he was here, he was visiting here, and I was working at the governor's mansion, he came and visited.

Fry: Oh, was that when Pat Brown was governor?

Patterson: Yes. And the other big people I met, like Mrs. Marshall Field, who owned the department store in Chicago. She gave me a cosmetic set, which I still have.

Patterson: From the top men in the country, all the way down to the guys that I supervise, and all the headline guys I've supervised. And all the headline guys that I treat now and that I deal with. Guys that have come off of death row. From the highest to what society considers the lowest, I personally know about it, you see. And the famous guys that I'm supervising now, and the problems that I had with some of the headline guys.

You want to see something I have here? You know who David Hilliard is--I'm his counselor. And I have this letter from him. He's one of the cases I have now.

Fry: Oh, I didn't realize he was at Vacaville.

Patterson: You should see the medical doctors that I've had as prisoners in my caseload--top ones.

I'm going to put all this together, and I'm going to title it, "From the Top to the Bottom."

Fry: Well, in your conversations with men who came to the mansion, were you able to approach topics of the day with them, and talk to them? Can you tell me anything about what you conversed about?

Patterson: Well, just like with Adlai Stevenson, when he first came here, we used to talk about the California weather. And we tried to compare Sacramento with Washington, D.C. And he said, Sacramento was a little Washington, more or less--with the capitol dome and all that. And he was saying you don't find many fellows with positions like I have.

Fry: What did he mean by that?

Patterson: You didn't find many police officers like that, with the job that I had, doing what I was doing. At that time, civil rights marches hadn't opened the door yet.

And Henry Cabot Lodge used to talk about if I come back there, what to do. And he said things like, "If you're ever back East, come by my office."

Fry: What was his position at that time? Was that when he was United Nations Ambassador?

Patterson: No, I think he was Secretary of State then.

 And the one that I talked to on the phone. I never met him, I just talked to him--Sherman Adams. I never did get to meet him, only over the phone. At the time, they were setting up Warren's appointment, as I've told you.

Transcribers: Arlene Weber, Pat Raymond

Final Typist: Mary Millman

Family Background
 Marjorie Watts Towns Patterson
 (Mrs. Edgar James Patterson)

By Marjorie ^{Watts} Towns Patterson
 (July 20, 1972)

Catherine Rotchford (my great grandmother, and daughter Alice Rotchford (my grandmother) born Nov. 20, 1850 came to California from Virginia about 1853.

Alice ^{F.} Rotchford and William E. Towns (my grandfather) were married in the East Bay Dec. 14, 1867.

(farmer then pipe fitter at Mare Island Navy Yard)
 My father, Wallace N. Towns was born in Suisun, Calif. ^{and raised in Colusa} Sept. 20, 1870. He and my mother, Annie Vawter of Lynchburg, Va., were married Oct. 20, 1905. They had two children, William ^{N.} and Marjorie Towns.

Marjorie Towns was married to Edgar Patterson Feb. 23, 1942.

* went back to Oakland when 19 or 20. Raised by Nobles in Colusa.

Family Background
(2)

Catherine Rotchford and daughter Alice came from Virginia to San Francisco, Calif.

The William Towns family lived in San Francisco, a short time in Lucien Calif. and in Oakland.

Wallace Towns and family lived in Allensworth, Calif. 1910 and then in Vallejo, Calif. and Oakland.

Marjorie and Edgar Patterson have lived in Sacramento since their marriage 1942.

The Sacramento Bee
August 7, 1974

Edle Patterson of 721 41st St. and his wife were among the last to visit **Earl Warren** before he went to the hospital. It was a rewarding experience for Patterson, the black Sacramento High School sprint star who became a guard at the Governor's Mansion when it was occupied by the Warren family. Patterson, now a senior probation counselor at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville and a teacher of an adult education course in Sacramento twice a week, went to see the former California governor and retired chief justice and Mrs. Warren at their apartment in the Sheraton hotel. They were so pleased to see their old friends from Sacramento they kept them four and one-half hours talking about old times.

Edgar Patterson's account of his last visit with Earl Warren, 24 June 1974

I must have been the last former staff member to visit and have a long discussion with our late Governor and Chief Justice Earl Warren.

My wife and I arrived in Washington, D.C. on June 24, 1974 to start my Justice Study tour which included Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Pa., New York, N.Y., Hartford, Conn. and Boston, Mass., for my Criminal Justice classes at Sacramento State University at Sacramento so that I can give my students something new in their studies of Criminal Justice. Chief Justice Earl Warren, Retired had been told of my arrival in Washington and made arrangements for his driver to pick my wife and me up on June 27 and drive us to his home at the Sheraton Park Hotel Apartments to visit with him and Mrs. Warren.

The Chief Justice wanted to talk about old times when he was Governor. He was weak but in good spirits. We discussed some of the things

we used to do at the Governor's Mansion and also in the Governor's Office.

I told him his Supreme Court decision, *Oliver Brown, et al vs. Board of Education of Topeka* seemed to be based on our discussions of my early school life in New Orleans. He laughed and indicated many factors and much evidence were taken under consideration in making that decision. One of the things we talked most about was the Department of Corrections and what a bad shape it was in when he took over as Governor. He indicated he was very lucky to have found Mr. Richard M^cLee and to have appointed him as the first Director of the Department of Corrections. He felt Mr. M^cLee did one of the best jobs of any of his appointees. He stated that Mr. M^cLee had just recently visited Washington, D.C. and telephoned him but did not have time to make a personal visit. He wanted me to telephone Mr. M^cLee and tell him he was sorry he did not get to see him personally on that visit.

2.
 We also talked about some of the good decisions made by Sacramento Judges such as Thomas McBride and Philip Wilkins of the U.S. District Court and that they would make good Supreme Court justices. He wanted me to contact many of his friends in Sacramento and just say "hello" for him. Watergate was mentioned in our discussion and the Chief Justice felt sorry for the many young lawyers who got caught up in that negative situation.

I would say one of the most important subjects we talked about was the remaining members of his Court. He was worried about the health of Justice Thurgood Marshall and Justice William Douglas. He felt when these two leave the Court, many of the decisions of his Court would be either "chipped away" or overruled. The Chief Justice indicated that the wrong in our government will eventually right itself through time and that we have a very good justice system. There is power in Washington, D.C.

would be removed if they are wrong in their actions governing the Country. Many of his suggestions and ideas of changes seem to have occurred and are still occurring. It certainly was too bad that he had to die at the time when great changes are being made in our Government. I am sure many of his ideas and constructive changes will also be made.

I must say again this was one of the happiest visits I had made with this great man and my best friend. He was a friend who had always given me fatherly advice and good counseling in all areas of my life. The Chief Justice indicated I should write a book about the men and women I have known in the highest positions in Government to the lower men I supervised on parole and counseled in prison. This is a task I intend to do.

Edgar J. Patterson,
Counselor-Psychotherapist
Professor

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